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MENAGERIES, CIRCUSES AND THEATRES







THE WRITER ON HIS SIXTY-EIGHTH BIRTHDAY, OCTOBER, 1926.

[*Frontispiece.*



# MENAGERIES, CIRCUSES AND THEATRES

BY  
E. H. BOSTOCK  
J.P., F.Z.S.

*With 32 Illustrations*

NEW YORK  
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY  
1928



Printed in Great Britain by  
The Whitefriars Press, Ltd.,  
London and Tonbridge.

THIS BOOK,  
THE RECORD OF MY EARLY STRUGGLE AND AFTER,  
IS DEDICATED TO  
MY LIFE'S PARTNER.



ELIZABETH.



## FOREWORD

BY

E. ROSSLYN MITCHELL, LL.B., M.P. FOR PAISLEY.

ON a misty autumn evening in the year 1890, a small boy, who had been warned by his parents not to go to the Shows, wandered down New City Road, Glasgow, in a spirit of adventure to see what was afoot. He could not go to the Shows, because his pockets, though full of string and india-rubber, slate pencils, old watch wheels and a knife, were empty of coin of the Realm. And Shows exist to collect coins, not string and old watch wheels. But he would be able to see the outside of the Shows and survey the more fortunate people who, having money, could enter the forbidden land. At the moment of his arrival on the waste ground—now occupied by a Mission Hall—the Show was about to begin. On a platform in connection with a magnificent front entrance, brilliantly lit, appeared four figures, gorgeously attired, who proclaimed the good news of the arrival in Glasgow of the Most Wonderful Show on Earth. One of them described with amazing fluency the wonders of the jungle and the desert, wild animals from the frozen North and the torrid South, lions and tigers, bears and antelopes, elephants, camels, jaguars and snakes. Sweeping his arm around, he

declared that within these cages were specimens of all the wonder-fauna of the world.

The small boy listened, fascinated by the rhetoric, charmed by the descriptions of beasts which he had only read about. And then he crept round the back of the waggons, peeping in through wet canvas and tarpaulin, if he might but catch a glimpse of living monsters of the forest and the arctic snows.

A hand was lightly laid on his shoulder. Fear petrified his heart. He was making to run away when the owner of the hand, and the menagerie, said : "Are you fond of animals ?" Fond of animals ! Did this fine-looking, soft-voiced man imagine that this boy, alone among the whole race of boys, was not fond of animals ? Hadn't he read about them at school, in the "B.O.P." (when his big brothers were not looking), and in the Missionary Records ? Fond of animals ! He loved them—at a distance. And he said so. And the young man took the boy through an opening in the tarpaulin, and he saw—just what had thrilled thousands of boys and sent them to bed with eyes aflame and hearts athrob, to dream of deeds of derring-do that beat to a frazzle Buffalo Bill, Mexican Joe and the whole crowd of missionary pioneers.

The young man, after twenty more years among wild animals, and the boy, after twenty years among humans, met as fellow-councillors of the Second City of the Empire. And now the boy, greatly honoured by the invitation, writes a foreword to the fascinating story of the life of the young man—Mr. E. H. Bostock.

I have read with profound pleasure this book, every page full of interest, the whole pulsating with a



life of adventure and risk, mishaps and narrow escapes. It is an epic of the open road, the crowded city, the distant town, the somnolent countryside, a tale of a caravan. It is the story of a public entertainer who made it his rule in life never to do or show anything that would deceive the old or degrade the young. It is the story of a man to whom his patrons' children were as important as his own, who, in a business looked at askance in the days of my childhood, grew to be loved and honoured by the people among whom he lived as he was by those with whom he worked.

There is an undying fascination about a caravan. These wee houses so carefully prepared, in which every inch has its special purpose, where people dwell in a little self-contained community, hold for the young an enduring charm. And the romance that young people weave around everything that stays out at night permeates the atmosphere of the travellers. Do they not set out in long lines of waggons with wonderful horses to trek unknown distances, arriving this morning with band playing and colours flying—to-night displaying to an excited people the wonders they have longed to behold, and to-morrow, folding their tents, silently steal away to fresh fields leaving behind a memory of the majesty and minuteness of living things?

And as this story rolls out before the reader, he sees the man in charge, the engineer at the wheel, arranging, directing, guiding, encouraging. It is a great life to read about, full of fun and pathos, hard work and disappointment, luck and success.

Mr. Bostock has been called the Barnum of Britain.

Judged by the magnitude and multitude of his enterprises, he may well claim the title, for he has been a pioneer of modern entertainment as well as a practitioner of older forms.

What the public, outside of Glasgow, do not know is Bostock the Citizen, the man who, coming among a strange people, won so completely and conspicuously their affection and faith that they made him, by unanimous vote, their representative in the town council. Those years of discussion of big city problems, and the ready hand held out to the poorest and most wretched of people, have left a fragrance of business skill, civic judgment, and personal kindness that will live for generations. Had he been able to remain in public life, it is more than probable that the people whom he entertained and loved would have gladly seen him in higher office. When he retired, the further honour was bestowed upon our townsman of being created a Justice of the Peace for the County of the City of Glasgow.

“Good Luck to his book on its journey, and Good Luck to him and his family!” is the feeling of multitudes all over this land, but of none more earnestly than of the wee boy he long ago invited to have a free look at his beasts.

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## CHAPTER I

*The Founder of Bostock and Wombwell's Menagerie—George Wombwell's Small Beginning—How he Secured his Collection of Animals—A Dead Elephant a Bigger Draw than a Living One—A Dog and Lion Fight—Royal Patronage—The First Menagerie in Britain.*

INASMUCH as Bostock and Wombwell's was a thriving concern long before I assumed management of it, it is fitting that I should give an epitome of its interesting history before proceeding to my story proper.

George Wombwell, the world renowned menagerist, was born at Dudnored, near Saffron Walden, in Essex, in the year 1777. He died at Northallerton, Yorkshire, November, 1850, at the age of 73, and was buried at Highgate Cemetery, London. He had in early life a passion for domestic pets, and he took great pleasure in rearing birds, rabbits, dogs, and other animals. If any of them fell ill or were injured he nursed them with care, and would seek advice from the family doctor as to how to treat his pets.

In the course of years he went to London, and was engaged in business in Soho. The circumstance which entirely changed his former business and commercial life was a visit to the London Docks, where he witnessed the disembarkation of some of the largest boa constrictors that had ever been brought to this country. These reptiles, as much from fear as from ignorance of the art of managing them, had then no great attraction for menagerists.

Fear was an element that never entered Mr. Wombwell's mind, so he bought a pair of these ophidian monsters for £75. They formed his first investment, and laid the foundation of his future success and fortune. Within three weeks he had realised by their exhibition considerably more than the sum expended upon them.

At the age of thirty, Mr. Wombwell, stimulated by his success, began his celebrated caravan peregrinations throughout Great Britain. At the same time he secured an office and yard at Commercial Road, London, where he built waggons and bought and sold animals, etc. His business card, bearing a woodcut of a tiger, was as follows :—

WOMBWELL,

Wild Beast Merchant.

All sorts of Foreign Animals, Birds, etc., bought, sold,  
or exchanged, at the Repository of the  
Travelling Menagerie.

In order to secure animals he kept in touch with the pilots on the Thames and elsewhere, so that when the East Indiamen and the other foreign sea-going ships entered the Downs with wild animals aboard, Mr. Wombwell was promptly notified and got the first chance of buying them. Later, Mr. Wombwell engaged agents specially to watch the ships' arrivals.

Great risks were, and still are, run in the purchase of these animals. Mr. Wombwell bought the first giraffe that was imported, and paid £1,000 for it. It was taken to Commercial Road, and kept there while a squad of men built a special waggon for it, but the



GEORGE WOMBWELL, THE FOUNDER OF WOMBWELL'S MENAGERIE.

*[To face p. 2.]*



animal died within three weeks of its arrival. The same risk, I may say, is run in the purchase of lions, tigers, leopards, etc., while the chimpanzee and other specimens of the monkey tribe die off rapidly unless the utmost care and caution are taken, not only in getting them acclimatised, but also in providing them with suitable food.

Wombwell, by this time, had several rivals in the country, the greatest being Atkins, whom he often met at the great fairs, especially at Bartholomew Fair, London, to which both menageries resorted each year. About fair time one year, Mr. Wombwell was in the north doing extensive business, when, having occasion to go to London, he found Mr. Atkins advertising that his menagerie would be "the only wild beast show in the fair."

This was too much for Mr. Wombwell. He found he had only two weeks in which to post to Newcastle-on-Tyne. Upon arrival there he immediately closed the menagerie and started off for Smithfield, London, which he reached in ten days' time. It was an herculean task, as he exhibited each night on the road. He had fourteen huge waggons, and between fifty and sixty horses, the elephant's waggon alone requiring twelve horses to draw it. This waggon was 30 feet long, 13 feet in height, and 9 feet wide: it had six wheels, each of the tyres being 18 inches wide; each wheel weighed 7 cwt. Dragging this waggon up a steep hill often required the efforts of more than thirty horses.

On the arrival of the menagerie in London, it was found that both men and horses were absolutely spent,

while the elephant fell ill the same night, and was dead on the morning the fair commenced. Atkins heard of the loss, and immediately placarded the neighbourhood with the announcement that his menagerie contained "the only living elephant in the fair." Mr. Wombwell was not "caught napping." In a few hours he had posted up an immense cloth, on which were painted the words, "Come and see the only dead elephant in the fair!" The dead elephant proved a greater rarity than a live one, and Wombwell's menagerie was crowded from morning till night with people clamouring for admission. Barricades had to be erected to keep back the pressure of the crowd, while Atkins' show was nearly deserted.

After this fair Mr. Wombwell again started off north, and went as far as Aberdeen, the menagerie going into small towns and villages where no foreign wild animals had ever previously been seen.

It was in 1825, while in the Midlands, that some gentlemen, who were discussing the prowess of lions, recalled the lion fights which took place in the Tower during King James's reign. This led up to a dog and lion fight which took place in Warwick on July 26th, 1825. Such a fight, of course, would not be allowed in these enlightened times, but in those days all sorts of animal fights were encouraged, and heavy stakes were lost and won on the results.

The famous old pet lion "Nero," who allowed visitors to enter his den and even to ride on his back, could not be induced to fight the dogs, but his celebrated contemporary, "Wallace," made short work of the dogs on their transfer to his den.



No. 289



**GREAT LION FIGHT,**

AT WARWICK,

*Twenty Sixth of July, 1825.*

---

**GAL. TICKET, ONE GUINEA.**

---

*G. Wombwell*

AN ACTUAL TICKET SIGNED BY GEORGE WOMBWELL.

[To face p. 4.]



Five years later Mr. Wombwell enjoyed patronage by royalty for the first time. The menagerie was at Thirsk on May 3rd, 1830, when the Princess Victoria and her mother, the late Duchess of Kent, who were staying in the vicinity of Thirsk, visited the collection. Then in 1834, as recorded in the *Windsor Express* of that date, "Part of Mr. Wombwell's Royal No. 1 Collection of Wild Beasts was taken into the Quadrangle of Windsor Castle, on Monday, for the inspection of their Majesties King William the Fourth and Queen Adelaide, and visitors" (November 1st, 1834). Again, in 1842, "Mr. Wombwell had the honour (by Royal Command) of again taking part of No. 1 menagerie to the New Riding School, and exhibiting it to Her Majesty, Prince Albert, the Duke, Duchess, and Princess of Cambridge, etc., etc., and the royal and illustrious party were much pleased at seeing them" (*Windsor Express*, October 27th, 1842).

On two other occasions, October, 1847, and October, 1854, Mr. Wombwell received Royal Command to exhibit his No. 2 menagerie, which was then under the management of his niece, Mrs. Edmonds, in the Quadrangle at Windsor Castle. And on both these occasions Her Majesty took a great interest in the wild animals, especially in the lion-tiger cubs, a cross between a lion and a tigress, which were handed to the royal party by Mr. G. Wombwell and Mr. J. Bostock (see *Windsor Express*).

The last occasion on which the old No. 1 menagerie was visited by royalty was at Ballater, on October 23rd, 1869. When the Royal Family entered the menagerie the proprietor had the honour of being presented, and

no sooner was this done than the thirteen lions and lionesses simultaneously roared with all their might, and the royal party seemed amazed. The Princess Louise asked the proprietor what had caused the roaring, and he replied, "It was a royal salute." The real cause, however, was the approach of very stormy weather, as lions, tigers, hyenas, jackals, etc., always begin roaring before a storm. A heavy snowstorm actually occurred two days after this visit.

When the roaring subsided, the Princess expressed her appreciation of the magnificent lions. Most minute inquiries were made regarding many specimens, a beautiful pair of gazelles being the admiration of the whole party. The proprietor painstakingly described the management and feeding of the animals, in the details of which the Princess and the Prince displayed the liveliest interest. The great interest taken in wild animals by the Royal Family accounted for Her Majesty's frequent patronage of Mr. Wombwell's menagerie.

When travelling through the country "in the good old times," Mr. Wombwell experienced very little difficulty in obtaining sites for his menagerie. The market square in the centre of the town was invariably placed at his disposal, every facility being given for the show, while a warm welcome was extended to him by the officials and inhabitants, many of the latter journeying miles to meet the long line of carriages and horses; in fact, it was a veritable gala day.

He was very successful, and soon started a second menagerie and then a third, and after his death No. 1 (the original) was carried on by Mrs. Wombwell up

till 1865, when it was taken over by her nephew, and carried on by him until he disposed of it in Edinburgh in 1872. No. 2 was left to a niece, Mrs. Edmonds, who carried on till 1884, when the greater part was taken over by her son, who afterwards disposed of it to the Bostock family, Mrs. Bostock being a sister of Mrs. Edmonds and niece of Mr. Wombwell. This establishment was afterwards purchased in its entirety by the writer. No. 3, a small menagerie, was given to a nephew of his of the same name, but, after the death of Mr. G. Wombwell himself, this collection rapidly declined, and was sold off.

It will thus be seen that Wombwell's menageries have now been known throughout Great Britain for over 120 years as "wandering teachers of natural history," and had it not been for such teachers, what would the people in our towns and villages, and remote outlying districts in the wilds, among the hills and glens, from "Land's End to John o' Groats" have known of wild animals?

The *Scotsman* of April 10th, 1872, truly said of the menagerie: "Wombwell's collection is certainly the largest travelling, and the one which has done more to familiarise the minds of the masses of our people with the denizens of the forest than all the books of natural history ever printed during its wandering existence."

Whose was the first travelling menagerie in this country? I have frequently been asked this question, and I have gone to some trouble to obtain the information. The first menagerie in this country of which there is any record, I find, was Pidcock's, a small

affair, in 1708. Fifty years later Polito's appeared on the scene, and I have before me an advertisement of this show culled from the *Nottingham Journal* of September 28th, 1805, which reads as follows :—

During the Fair Only.—The largest travelling collection in the known world, to be seen in six safe and commodious caravans, built for the purpose and all united (which altogether provides one of the noblest views of the wonderful productions of Nature ever beheld) in the Market-place.

Polito's grand and pleasing assemblage of most rare and beautiful living birds and beasts, from the remotest parts of the known world ; among which are a noble lion from the Tower of London ; a striped Bengal tiger and tigress, commonly called Royal Tigers, acknowledged to be the finest ever seen in the kingdom ; four of those most singular of all quadrupeds, the large kangaroos from Botany Bay, males and females, noble male and female panthers, from the river La Plata, South America ; that most industrious of all animals, the beaver, remarkably handsome leopard and leopardess, the finest ever seen in this kingdom ; male and female wolves from the Alps ; the wolverine or glutton ; the Civet and Tibet, commonly called muscovy cats ; a large satyr, or Ethiopian savage ; the ichneumon, the opossum, the wanderoo, and upwards of fifty other quadrupeds.

Admittance (being Fair time) ladies and gentlemen one shilling—working people, servants, and children, sixpence only.

Birds and beasts bought, sold, or exchanged by the proprietor.

It will, therefore, be seen that Polito's menagerie was a thriving concern the year (1805) George Wombwell made his *début*. This menagerie and the ship





MRS. GEORGE WOMBWELL, 1854.

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transporting it were lost while crossing the Irish Channel on the way to Ireland, I believe, in 1835 or 1836; and, strange to relate, an oil painting of the interior of this menagerie, dated 1835, came into my possession some time ago. The picture had apparently been completed just prior to the disaster.

The next menagerie on the scene was Ballard's, which gained considerable publicity as a result of an exciting incident on October 20th, 1816, when a lioness, having escaped from the menagerie, attacked one of the leaders of the Exeter to London mail coach. From an issue of the Salisbury newspaper of that period, which I have before me, I cull the following report of the incident:—

The menagerie was on its way to Salisbury Fair, and the carriages were drawn into the side of the road for the night, previous to going into the town. Here the lioness made her escape. She was afterwards seen crossing the fields towards the Pheasant Inn by the landlady's sister, who, in the dusk, mistook the animal for a lively donkey.

On the Exeter mail coach drawing up to the inn, the beast rushed through the hedge, and, springing on one of the leaders, fixed her claws into the throat and chest of the poor horse, lacerating it in a fearful manner.

A large mastiff, belonging to the menagerie, rushed at the lioness, which then turned on the dog and quickly killed it, and she then took shelter in a granary belonging to the inn, where she was barricaded and ultimately captured and replaced in her den by the proprietor and his keepers.

This was a very fortunate incident for Ballard, as everyone went to see the lioness that had attacked the

horse belonging to the mail coach, and the price of admission was raised to the menagerie.

George Wombwell, who, as I have said, started on the road in 1805, was followed by Atkins, from whom he experienced keen opposition for several years. Van Amborough appeared on the road about the same time. He had several trained lions and other animals, with which he performed himself, but his show was not actually a travelling menagerie, but a few really clever performing animals.

Later came Hilton's, which was afterwards owned by William Manders, under whose management it grew to be a very fine show. Earl James was next on the list. He, in addition to his travelling show, which toured for a few years, had a small zoological collection at 287, Strand, London. *Imagine a Menagerie in the Strand at the present time!*

About 1860, Thomas Stevens, who spent most of his time in Ireland, opened up as a menagerie proprietor, and seven years later my parents, as Bostock and Wombwell's, made their *début* before the public with their own menagerie. Others who followed were John Day, John Simons, Whittington, William Sedgewick, Anderton and Rowland, Barnham, Chipperfield, Sargano Alicamoussa, and Sidney Braham. I entered the field in September, 1883, opened out with my No. 2 menagerie in February, 1889 (which comprised the greater part of my mother's menagerie), and with my No. 3 show in October, 1892. This Menagerie, which was called Barnham's, I purchased as a going concern from Mr. Frank Hall and

immediately put my own name over it. It is interesting to note that all that remains of all these wandering teachers of natural history is my own original menagerie.

I think it can be justly claimed that the first really big menagerie in this country was that owned by my great uncle, George Wombwell, and it is certain that he did more than any of his contemporaries in the business to promote the interest of the British people in zoology. Many will ask, where did we get the animals from to keep the menageries going at the period of which I write? Mr. William Cross, of Liverpool, was then the principal importer and dealer; also Messrs. W. and C. Jamrach, London, and a little later Carl Hagenbeck, of Hamburg. Then the late J. D. Hamlyn, London, supplied quite a lot, especially at the beginning of the Great War, and his place is now taken by G. B. Chapman, Tottenham Court Road, who is really doing a wonderful business in wild animals and birds all over the World.

## CHAPTER II

*Born into the Business—A School Rebellion—I join my Father's Menagerie at Age of Twelve—Details of My Father's Career—First Spotted Hyenas Born in Britain—I enter Lioness's Cage with Half-drunk Trainer—Experiences in Ireland—A Young Lion Chases the Irish, who demand Return of their Cash—We Lose our Best Horses—Impossible to Please the Irish.*

WHILE I should not go the length of claiming that menagerists, like poets, are born and not made, I believe that my long continued success as a showman goes to prove the immense advantage of being born into the business.

Sixty-eight years after the momentous event, I have no reason to cavil at the circumstances of my entry to the world. I was early accustomed to the laugh of the hyena, the roar of the lion, and the growl of the grizzly, and it may be that the spirit of emulation helped to produce for me the sound vocal equipment which is supposed to be essential to successful showmanship.

I was born at Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire, on October 19th, 1858, and received the little education I got as a boy at Tolleshunt Darcy School, and later at Kelvedon Collegiate School, both in Essex. My most vivid recollection of those days is of a rebellion at the former establishment which, precipitated by the schoolmaster's brutality towards me, culminated in the closing of the school.

I finally left school at Christmas, 1870, and, along





JAMES BOSTOCK, FATHER OF THE WRITER.

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with my elder brother, James William, proceeded to Cork. We travelled by train *viâ* London to Bristol, and thence by boat, and on arriving at our destination we had a happy reunion with our parents, whose menagerie was then on tour in the South of Ireland. I was then twelve years of age, and I was the proud little man when I was taken on the strength of the menagerie. Even while at school I had never completely lost touch with my father's business. Many of my vacations were spent with the menagerie, and keen was my disappointment when circumstances did not permit this.

It was but natural, I see now, that I should "follow in the footsteps of the dear old Dad." He, by the way, was the eldest son of a wealthy landowner and farmer near Leek, in Staffordshire, whose estate he should have inherited but for the entry of a stepmother, who, like other stepmothers, ushered in a new *régime*.

Shortly after his father's second marriage, my father, because he did not feel comfortable, left the old home, a visit to the neighbourhood of Edmond's (late Wombwell's) menagerie being the incident that shaped his future at this point. This was in 1839, when he was twenty-four years of age. Being an able-bodied man, over 6 feet in height, and having, on his father's farm, obtained a sound knowledge of horses, he easily secured a post as waggoner or horse-keeper with Edmond's menagerie. And here I may mention that it was at this period considered an honour to be on the staff of one of the Wombwell menageries.

This situation my father filled for nine years, when, by reason of his good education and smart appearance, supplemented by the experience he had gained on the road with the menagerie, he was appointed contracting and advertising agent in advance.

During the nineteen years he held the latter post he was the means of getting a Royal Command for two exhibitions of the menagerie in the Quadrangle at Windsor Castle, the first being in October, 1847, and the second in October, 1854. Her late Majesty Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, with various members of the Royal Family and representatives of the nobility and aristocracy, were present on both occasions.

My mother, who was a niece of the illustrious George Wombwell, paid occasional visits to the menagerie, and my father, who, like Father O'Flynn, had a wonderful way with him, exploited these visits to make the young lady his wife, the nuptial knot being tied when my father was thirty-eight and my mother twenty years of age.

An incident which occurred at Bury, Lancashire, in April, 1869, when James William, my elder brother, and I were during our Easter holidays from school on a visit to the menagerie, is worth recalling. At that time the show included a waggon which contained a brown Russian bear, three-parts grown; a full-grown Canadian bear; two full-grown Russian wolves; and two adult spotted or laughing hyenas—all of which lived together and executed a few tricks by way of public performance. On the whole, this company got on very well together, but when there was a



MRS. J. BOSTOCK, MOTHER OF THE WRITER.

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rupture of relationship the din, to which the hyenas were the principal contributors, was deafening.

During the early hours of one of two mornings we spent at Bury, Lancashire, we were awakened by a tremendous noise which we knew emanated from the cage occupied by the bears, wolves, and hyenas. In those days none of the staff slept at the menagerie except the elephant-keeper, who occupied a bunk beside his charge, but on this occasion the menagerie had no human occupant owing to the fact that the elephant waggon was under repair, the elephant being stabled in a coach-house at a local inn, where its keeper was on duty beside it.

It so happened that my father was away on business, and my mother, her maid, and James William and I were the only individuals near the place. My brother and I, who occupied a small waggon just outside the enclosure, went to my mother's waggon when the disturbance had lasted for some time, but she refused to allow us to proceed within the enclosure to investigate. Instead she waited patiently for the appearance of a member of the staff.

The first to come on the scene was a Lancashire lad, who turned up at 7.30 a.m. Although he was the most recent recruit in my father's employment, my mother decided to send him into the menagerie to see what was the matter. James William and I followed him at a discreet distance.

We watched the youth opening the shutters of the waggon, and then heard him exclaim, "I can't see anything wrong, but—someone has put two black pups in beside them!"

My mother, to whom this news was reported, pooh-poohed the idea of black pups having been put into the waggon, and opined that one of the animals had become a mother overnight. This, indeed, was the explanation of the furore in the waggon.

The female hyena had increased the strength of the menagerie by two. Spotted hyenas are born coal-black, and it is later that they turn a fawn colour and the spots, which give them their name, develop. This was the first instance of spotted hyenas having been born in this country, so regarding their colour at birth everyone was naturally ignorant.

The mother of these pups had caused all the commotion. She had driven all the other animals, including her own mate, into the far corner of the 18 feet waggon, and the slightest movement of one of them had been sufficient to arouse her ire.

With the arrival of other members of the staff the waggon was partitioned off and the proud hyena mother was given privacy to attend to her progeny. I may add that these two adult hyenas increased the stock of the menagerie, two at a time, on several subsequent occasions, all of the pups being successfully reared. The sex of hyenas is very difficult to determine, and it is interesting to note that prior to the birth of the pups at Bury my father was under the impression that his two hyenas were both males.

Later in the same year, when we were at Stratford, near London, I had an adventure which is indelibly stamped in my memory. Among our carnivora we had a splendid forest-bred lioness named after the City of York, because it joined the menagerie there, who

by the time we arrived at Stratford was proud in the possession of three cubs six or seven weeks old.

From the day of her arrival right up till the incident I am about to relate, "City of York" was exclusively handled by a man named Thomas Hurley, who was a particularly daring fellow. The trouble arose owing to the fact that Stratford was Hurley's home town, and in the course of the day he met old acquaintances who were foolishly kind to him.

Shortly before ten o'clock in the evening, when "City of York," in common with the other inmates of the menagerie, was pacing to and fro close to the bars of her cage in anticipation of supper, Hurley, whose caution had been undermined by John Barley-corn, insisted that I should accompany him into "City of York's" cage. Being too young and inexperienced to appreciate the danger in this proceeding, I acquiesced.

The lioness, I assure you, was in no mood to receive us. Apart from her own appetite for supper, the restiveness of her cubs, who had by this time learned the taste of meat, had also irritated her.

The fact that the lioness was growling at her cubs and pawing them to the rear of the cage, should have put Tom Hurley on his guard, but the keeper on this occasion, as I have indicated, was not quite normal. Instead of approaching Tom for the caress she was in the habit of accepting from him, she on this occasion took absolutely no notice of him. He tried several wiles to attract her favourable attention, but her ladyship refused to be cajoled.

In his semi-intoxicated condition Tom then did

what he would never have done when in his sober senses. He took off his cap and made to strike the lioness with it, whereupon she lifted a threatening paw and emitted an ominous growl.

These signs, I believe, helped to sober Tom. At all events, they gave his friends outside a sense of his foolhardiness, and, following, if not as a result of, their entreaties, he made a discreet retreat, shepherding me out in front of him.

I can picture this scene as if it happened but yesterday. I did not attach much importance to it at the time, but the recollection of it, I confess, induces a shudder. The risks we took without qualm or quiver many years ago now cause me to marvel. Of course, in those days there was no Employers' Liability Act, and we were without the consciousness that we, so to speak, carried our lives in our hands.

But to hark back, or, rather, push ahead, to the time when my brother, James William, and I were added to my father's staff in the south of Ireland; in the course of a few months I became the utility man—or boy—of the show, while James William, who was three years my senior and a very much better scholar than I, assisted in the advance work, which meant that he accompanied the agent who usually preceded the show ten or twelve days ahead.

Mention of James William reminds me of a very exciting incident which took place at Naas, County Kildare, in July, 1871. My brother, who was beginning to fancy himself as a trainer of wild animals, went inside a cage and began to play about with two eighteen-months old lions. Unfortunately, he neg-



THE WRITER AT TWO YEARS AND NINE MONTHS.

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lected to fasten the door of the cage properly, and he was scarcely inside the cage when one of the young lions was out of it. When he realised what had happened, he took prompt steps to prevent the escape of the other cub. This occurred about seven o'clock in the evening, when there was a fairly large crowd inside the menagerie.

The animal which got out of the cage was, I might say, practically harmless, but of its docile disposition the public were ignorant. Pandemonium prevailed when the young lion burst into the enclosure. Our patrons rushed helter-skelter for the exit, which was also the entrance, where my mother was seated. Many times since have I laughed unrestrainedly at the sequel, both amazing and amusing, which developed.

It was not to be wondered at that the public wanted to show "clean heels" when a lion had got loose, but when people are rushing pell-mell to save their skins one does not expect them, once they have reached a point of comparative safety, to halt for a quibble over a few coppers, and thus hold up the flight of those as keen on escape as themselves.

But this was what actually happened at Naas. Several of the terror-stricken crowd, fleeing, so they felt, for their lives, demanded the return of their admission money before they would pass outside, and my mother deemed it prudent to comply.

"Bedad," was the common complaint, "an' 'tis a foine thing to be doing to the paiple—takin' their money from thim an' then turnin' the wild beasts on thim!"

It was only a matter of a few minutes until one of

the keepers had seized the truant and, with some resistance, returned him to his cage, the youngster being much more scared than the public, who had the "wind-up" badly enough in all conscience.

I might here mention that an animal which escapes from a travelling menagerie is bound to be very timid, and will not attack any one for a considerable period unless an attempt is made to seize or hold it.

It may be imagined that this untoward incident prejudiced our show at Naas. It was rather the reverse. Not only did the scared ones return, but they also brought their friends with them to have a look at "th' little divil that scared us out ov th' place."

This Irish tour was, however, a financial failure. Ireland was at that time in a very depressed condition, and, to make matters worse, we struck many parts at what turned out to be the wrong time.

Eventually my father decided to return to Belfast and ship to Liverpool. To raise the cost of freightage he decided to part with several of his horses. In disposing of these he had to go warily, but, as things turned out, he was not far-seeing enough.

If a menagerie proprietor desires to sell a few horses, it is fatal to his chances of a sale to put up these only for auction, for dealers will conclude that the animals are useless. On the other hand, if he offers the entire lot for sale, this course makes for confidence and the animals disposed of will fetch their market value.

The latter plan was adopted by my father, who thought he had made certain of retaining the animals he wanted by putting a stiff reserve on them, but,

ironically enough, these animals, with which he would not have parted willingly at any price, were the only ones for which an offer above the reserve was made and consequently were sold. This was a sore blow to my father, who was a great judge of horseflesh, and spent almost half of his lifetime at horse fairs in search of the right class of animal.

The entire space within these covers could be filled with details of our experiences in Ireland in 1871, but the narrative would not redound to the credit of the Irish people of that period, who were a very different proposition to the Hibernians of to-day. To please them was impossible, to irritate them easy. The colour of our waggons, which were and still are painted yellow, offended their artistic sense, while an apparently deeper cause for offence was the Royal Arms which we had emblazoned over the entrance. The absence of clowns also aroused the ire of the Irish, especially in the south, and it was of no avail for us to point out that clowns do not form part of a menagerie. Thus, in spite of the fact that our menagerie and performance were second to none and our band touched a very high standard, we had a strenuous struggle in Ireland and were jolly glad to get out of it.

It took two trips to transport the entire outfit and personnel, and I recollect, when we were all aboard for the second voyage (December 19th, 1871), the band, as we were getting away from the quay at Belfast, struck up "Come back to Erin," which evoked applause from the onlookers. But when we had got nicely away the band changed their tune by breaking

into a then popular song, "Not for Joe, not for Joe." We had a fairly good passage and reached Liverpool without mishap. My parents never returned to Ireland, but when I toured there for five months in 1887 I did fairly well.

### CHAPTER. III

*Exciting Incidents in Wales—Dangerous Roads—Escape of Two Russian Wolves—How Menageries were Illumined—A Nine Days' Wonder—An Elephant on Fire—A Terrifying Sight—Distracted Animal Avoids Trampling on Prostrate Children—My Exciting Experience in Fire at Nottingham—Fred Wombwell, my Uncle, Attacked by a Lion—A Tiger Springs to his Assistance—A Boy Forfeits his Life for Teasing an Elephant.*

SEVERAL exciting incidents which occurred during a tour of Wales, undertaken in the spring of 1872, are still fresh in my memory, even though I was but a stripling when they occurred.

I remember that we journeyed through Rhonda Valley, a part of South Wales which had then just been opened up. Ours was the first menagerie to risk the journey. The roads at many points were in an extremely dangerous condition. Where the passage was very narrow and along a precipitous hillside we had to put ropes over the tops of the waggons and a big squad of men were given the job of holding on to the ropes in case the road on the side of the precipice would give way beneath the weight. It was arduous work. I know, for I took a hand in it. Of course, we had to return the same way and the ticklish operation had to be repeated.

The first real sensation, however, was the escape of two of our Russian wolves. This occurred at Hafod. They got out of their cage at two o'clock in the afternoon. One was recaptured promptly while still

within the menagerie enclosure, but the other fugitive gave a whole lot of trouble. It was restored to its cage just in time for the evening performance.

Once out of the cage, it made better use of the time at its disposal than its companion, and was out of the enclosure like a shot from a gun. At the end of the field where we were stanced there was a shallow river. This it crossed in record time, but its pursuers, of whom I was one, rejoiced to see that the precipitous bank on the opposite side baffled it.

This bank rose almost perpendicularly, and despite its frantic scrambles, the wolf could not get very far up. Several times it clawed up three-quarters of the way, only to come slithering down, so steep was the rise and so insecure the footing.

It was certainly to our liking to see the wolf held up in this fashion, but even then its capture was not much nearer, for if a wolf could not scale this bank, how were we to reach it where it clung half-way up?

We pondered the problem—and solved it. Someone was sent back to the menagerie for a long ladder. This was dropped across the wolf, which, losing its balance, slithered down the slope and a number of us pounced on it, and when its legs had been tied, it was carried back to its cage on the ladder. On the way, however, one of the staff received a nasty bite on the wrist.

Its recapture took over two hours, and, as was to be expected, the whole locality was in a ferment of excitement over its escape. Had this wolf got clear away, as seemed likely when we first gave chase, there would have been a fine “how-d’ye-do” among the



Welsh sheep farmers, for the wolf would undoubtedly have taken a heavy toll of their flocks. The steep river bank was a blessing for the menagerie funds.

Two months later, at the village of Tiabach, one of the most nightmarish scenes in the whole of my career was staged. The memory of the incident is vivid and unforgettable.

My recollection of menagerie life goes back to the days when candles were used to light up small menageries and shows. These, sometimes in candle-sticks, but more often in bottle-necks, were placed all round the cages of the wild animals. Candles were later supplanted by what we called grease-pots, which were somewhat similar to those used to-day by engine-drivers.

This method of lighting ultimately gave way to naphtha flares. When we used these in Ireland in 1871, we were really the pioneers of the system in the British Isles. The majority of menageries on the road (and competition was pretty keen in those days) found it impracticable to adopt this lighting system owing to the fact that supplies of naphtha were not always available on the road, while the carriage of this inflammable liquid was, to say the least, discouraged by the railway companies. This attitude was in consequence of a terrible accident at Abergele, North Wales, involving the destruction of a train conveying naphtha, and the loss of several lives.

Bostock and Wombwell's, however, solved the problem by contracting for supplies in tin boxes with wooden casings, which arrived at regular intervals direct from Newcastle-on-Tyne, and thus assured the

firm of its position of "light and leading" in the menagerie world of that time.

The device by which the flares were adapted for the burning of paraffin instead of naphtha was not evolved till seven or eight years later. It was the invention of a man named R. Sawdon, who belonged to Leeds, and although it did not give as good a light as naphtha, it was very much safer to handle, and supplies of paraffin by that time were obtainable almost anywhere. The paraffin flare, when introduced, was a nine days' wonder in the business. It represented a stupendous advance.

During a tour of South Wales, I think it was at Tiabach, our naphtha flares had been strung on a wet rope along the poles in the centre of the menagerie, with the result that when the rope dried by the heat of the flares, it sagged very low in the middle.

One of our "turns" at this time was a docile but huge African (Abyssinian) female elephant named Lizzie, who was then in her prime. In the course of her performance she mounted a tub in the centre of the menagerie. In doing so on this occasion, her shoulder struck the bottom of the flare lamp and severed this at the screw. In a trice the naphtha was touching her back, which almost simultaneously was enveloped in flames.

Right from the back of her neck to her tail the poor creature became a mass of dancing, dazzling flames. A more terrifying sight it has never been my experience, yea misfortune, to behold.

It was no wonder that the normally quiet, well-behaved elephant at once lost her mental equilibrium,



BIG LIZZIE, AFRICAN ELEPHANT THAT FIGURES IN SEVERAL OF MY STORIES.

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and commenced to plunge to and fro in the enclosure, nor that the public, in face of such a nerve-racking spectacle, stampeded for the exit (which also served as the entrance) in order to get away. At that moment I happened to be at the entrance, and when I glimpsed the terrible occurrence I at once went to lend my assistance in extinguishing the flames on the poor elephant's back. I literally had to walk over the heads and shoulders of a surging mass of humanity to get to the animal. Some may think this an exaggeration, but I solemnly assure you that it is a fact that I did not touch the ground with my feet until I had cleared the people. But for all I was able to do, I might as well have stayed away, though inaction in a case of this kind was out of the question for an impressionable youth like myself.

It was really impossible to stay the frantic plungings of the blazing and distracted animal, and we had no option but to wait until the flames on her back had burned themselves out. Hither and thither she plunged in her agony and despair, and the most astounding feature of the sensational occurrence, to my mind, was this. Children, knocked down in the stampede for the exit, lay spreadeagled and terror-stricken on the ground, but, incredible as it may seem, that agonised animal in her demented plungings took the utmost care to avoid treading on them. Even in her dire distress the good nature of the elephant was apparent, and I reckon it the most wonderful sight of my whole career to behold that big, powerful animal straddling gingerly, but rapidly, over the prostrate forms of children as she rushed backwards and

forwards trying to rid herself of the inexplicable inferno which had kindled on her back.

In the reading, this incident may appear to have lasted some considerable time, but the whole affair was really over in less than three minutes. The flames quickly burned themselves out. What a sigh of relief we all breathed when this came to pass, and the stricken animal, apparently realising that the flames had died, but still quivering with fear and pain, happily came to a standstill! Promptly then we got to work to alleviate her pain and to pacify her. Gallons of oil of several kinds were poured on to her scorched back, and in a little while it was evident that her pain had been greatly relieved, and she was led away to rest and recover.

You may be surprised to learn that the elephant did survive her grim and painful ordeal. As a matter of fact, she lived for many years more, and if you follow these memoirs a little further you will find that she figured in equally interesting, if happily less exciting, episodes. A thick skin, very often quite a useful thing for even a human being, in this instance saved an elephant's life.

A year or two later—on October 7th, 1875, to be precise—we had another fire. The menagerie was at Nottingham Goose Fair, which was then held during the first week of October. On this occasion our menagerie was erected in the Centre Row, the proper menagerie site, near the Talbot Hotel, being occupied by a rival menagerie. The congestion of the Fair at this period, especially of the Centre Row, was something to be remembered.



About 8.30 on the Thursday night, when the Fair was at its height (and only those who have visited Nottingham during the Fair can realise what that means), it was discovered that my father's living waggon was on fire. I immediately dashed in to see what could be done, and found that the fire was at the back of the stove and behind a large mirror above the stove. Until the mirror had been broken by the heat or otherwise it was impossible to get to the seat of the outbreak. There was very little water in the waggon, and fire extinguishers were, of course, then unknown.

This living waggon formed part of the front entrance, and the band usually sat on the other side of it, but at this particular time, it so happened, they were having fifteen minutes of an interval. One of the band, however, came to my assistance. His name was Tom King. He was a bombardon player and an ex-Guardsman, who was 6 feet 4 inches in height, and was an athlete in every sense of the word. He, of course, having more experience than I, at once called for something with which to break the mirror. He was handed in a bass broom with a 4-foot handle, and with this he slashed through the mirror and also through the sheet iron at the back of it. The flames at once shot through the hole he had made, and things looked pretty serious for a few seconds. By this time, however, water had been procured from various sources, and within a short time thereafter the conflagration was subdued. This was very fortunate, as, had the flames spread to the next booth, the result would probably have been extremely serious.

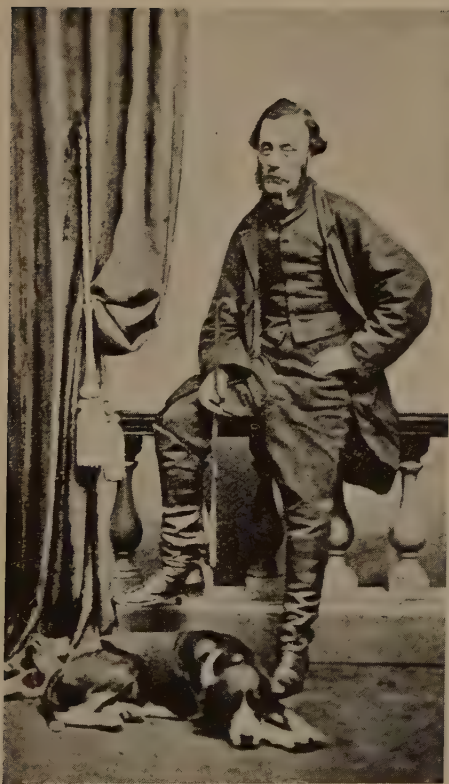
Water continued to arrive after the fire had been extinguished. The water, let me explain, did not, as may be imagined, come from the roundabouts, beside which nowadays there is always a good supply of water for use in the engines, etc. At the time under review, however, roundabouts were either propelled by hand or pulled round by a pony.

What I do remember most clearly is that I was almost suffocated by smoke, and that I had to be carried out to the air, but—"All's well that ends well."

I may say that Nottingham Fair, which now lasts three days and is held in the centre of the city, is the best of the British Fairs. But Hull Fair, which is held immediately after the Nottingham one, is nearly twice as large as the latter, and is accommodated on a very large site just on the borders of the city. These are the only Fairs that our menageries now make any effort to attend.

I think it was during the early part of this same tour that my uncle, Mr. Fred. Wombwell, who was an expert in the training and exhibiting of wild animals, was involved in an exciting episode. This occurred at Redruth. My uncle was absolutely without fear, and the animals he handled seemed to know this. They all respected him, and in some cases they actually loved him. He had, however, one failing. That was the habit of taking a "drop too much" occasionally. This failing nearly cost him his life at Redruth.

We had at that time two half-grown lions and two half-grown tigers which performed together. He entered the cage of these young lions and tigers



THE WRITER'S UNCLE, FRED WOMBWELL, 1868.

*[To face p. 30.]*



“under the influence” and proceeded to display much more courage than discretion. The upshot was that one of the lions suddenly set upon him, and he was in imminent danger of his life when, marvellous to relate, one of the tigers immediately sprang to his assistance and attacked the treacherous lion in the rear.

This diverted the lion’s attention from my uncle, and, no doubt somewhat sobered by the startling development, he promptly retreated from the cage. When I add that the lion which attacked him was reckoned the most docile of the quartette in the cage, you may conclude that a lion may be a “pussyfoot” in more senses of the term than one. The moral for those handling wild animals is never to approach them under the influence of alcohol.

A painful incident occurred in April, 1872, at Hanley, Staffordshire, when the big African elephant, now completely recovered from the burns she had received at Tiabach, killed a fourteen-year-old boy by crushing him against a wall. As you may guess, we were all very much upset by this fatality, but there was some satisfaction in the knowledge that neither we nor the animal were blameworthy. Many local witnesses came forward to testify that the unfortunate boy had given the elephant great provocation.

## CHAPTER IV

*Our First Visit to Scotland—Our Brilliant Band Deserts Us—No Tips in Scotland—Exciting Experience in a Gale at Edinburgh—Hooliganism in Glasgow—My Cousin, Harriet Wombwell, attacked by a Hyena—I Go to Her Assistance—Crossing the Sands at Ravenglass—Our Heaviest Waggon Sticks in Mid-Stream—Elephant's Strength Takes us out of the Hole—A Bad Ne'erday—Elephant Cured of Colic—How she showed Her Gratitude.*

THE first occasion on which Bostock and Wombwell's menagerie crossed the Border and forayed into Scotland was in 1873, but we were following a trail beaten out by other large menageries, including Wombwell's Edmonds (late Wombwell's) and Manders. A number of smaller shows, such as Day's, Symons's, Whittington's, and Stevens's, had also preceded us to the land "o' brose and paritch." Certain of the circumstances of our first attempt at "peaceful penetration" render it memorable.

In those days Bostock and Wombwell's Band of ten performers was undoubtedly a brilliant combination; the best on the road, in fact. To be a member of it was certainly considered an honour, and competition for places was at times pretty keen. It comprised bombardon, euphonium, two trombones, tenor horn, solo cornet (leader), soprano cornet, repiano cornet, second cornet, and double drums.

The bandsmen, in "toppers" and frock-coats (very different in style to the present fashions), were an





THE WRITER AT FIFTEEN.

[To face p. 32.]



aristocratic-looking lot. To maintain their appearance of dignity and refinement they did not rely solely on their salaries. Tips were a potential source of income, it being no unusual thing for well-to-do visitors to place a guinea in the palm of the conductor for a "By Request." But if they dressed well, there is no doubt that Bostock and Wombwell's Band also played well. "Hallelujah Chorus," "Heavens are Telling," "Life's a Bumper," "Gloria," "Worthy is the Lamb," "William Tell," "Poet and Peasant," "Maritana," these are typical of the high-class nature of the "fare" they supplied.

The band in those days played outside practically the whole time the menagerie was open to the public. It wasn't simply a case of making a noise to draw a crowd and then desisting so that the crowd would pay and trip inside. The high-class musical feast lasted as long as the menagerie was open. Ultimately, after my father's death, we, the younger generation, realised that this was a stupid and ruinous arrangement, for when they could get first-class instrumental music for nothing, many people were not inclined to spend money to hear the natural fanfare of the wild animals. In fact, it was no unusual thing for a patron, who had come into the menagerie, to remark after a cursory glance round the enclosure, "Yes, it's a very fine show you've got here, but, eh, I must get outside to listen to your splendid band." This, of course, did not pay the piper, and subsequently we found it to our advantage to withdraw the band as a free outside show and add it to the inside attractions.

With regard to our first visit to Scotland, when we

got the length of Belford, which is close to the Border, our band flatly refused to accompany us to "Caledonia, stern and wild," and no amount of persuasion would induce them to recant their decision. The reason they gave was the poor quality and high price of Scottish lodgings. There was undoubtedly a great deal of justification for this impeachment of the Scottish landladies of that period, but this excuse was sheer camouflage on the part of the bandsmen. What really worried them was the knowledge that there would be no "tips" in Scotland. Some of the bandsmen had missed these on previous visits with other menageries.

At that time there were very few first-class bands in Scotland, and appreciation for a "foreign" band was bound to be scant. Bostock and Wombwell's brilliant combination, rather than risk a series of rebuffs, unceremoniously deserted us. The fact of the matter is that Scotland's taste for instrumental music had not yet been developed. The difference to-day to one who knew the situation fifty years ago is really wonderful. Scotland now stands very high musically.

We carried on for four months without a band. My father, perhaps very old-fashioned, declared that he would never look for another one, and he kept his word. Another band came to him near Dundee and offered their services, and were engaged right away. The deserters, we learned later, went into the Newcastle district and pitched a "show" of their own, trade being remarkably good in this district at this period and colliers in particular making very big wages, being paid by results.

The bands we subsequently enlisted, I frankly admit, were not as efficient as the one which left us in the lurch, and the guineas given as largesse to the bandsmen by swells for "By Requests" became less numerous. They were plentiful when the band discoursed outside the menagerie.

We journeyed as far north as Elgin, and returned to winter in Edinburgh, our site being that now occupied by the Waverley Market. A fat cattle sale had just preceded us, and by arrangement the wooden structure in which this was held was left standing for our occupation. All went well until Sunday, January 25th, 1874, when, during a terrific gale, one of the gables of this building was blown in and the whole structure was in imminent danger of collapse. To avoid this we set to and smashed in a large number of the boards of the damaged gable, and also some of the boards of the other gable. This allowed the wind-pressure to escape, and saved the main portion of the building, and also, perhaps, prevented a catastrophe.

From Edinburgh we trekked to Glasgow, taking all the towns *en route*. We exhibited on ground in High Street, Glasgow, near where High Street Station now stands. After putting in a few weeks there, we moved to vacant ground in North Street where Henderson's stables are now situated.

Even at this time of day, our first experience of Glasgow is recalled with very mixed feelings. The audiences we enjoyed—I mean suffered—especially in a pitch in North Street, near Anderston Cross, were the worst we had ever experienced, and we had certainly been in a few rough quarters in England,

Ireland, and Wales. We applied for police protection against hooliganism, and the city authorities made but a poor response by providing us with a septuagenarian, who, I think, went under the name of police watchman. His services were worse than useless.

We had on our staff my cousin Harriet Wombwell, a lady trainer of undoubted skill and daring. She was a daughter of William Wombwell, who had been killed by an elephant at Coventry in 1849, while trying to stop two of these animals from fighting. One day at Kilmarnock, while Miss Wombwell was rehearsing with a number of bears, wolves, and hyenas, the last-mentioned, two in number, suddenly attacked her. These were the spotted hyenas which had caused some commotion when we were at Bury.

They turned on Miss Wombwell during the dinner-hour, and I happened to be the only member of the staff within the enclosure. When I saw how things were going, I picked up a heavy stick and dashed to my cousin's assistance. Brisk as I was, I thought I was going to be too late, for even as I reached the cage, the hyenas had the lady on her back and were biting viciously at her. When I entered the cage, the sight of me, brandishing the stick and shouting was enough for the hyenas, who at once retreated from the prostrate lady. By this time other members of the staff, attracted by the noise, had arrived on the scene, and, with their assistance, I got my cousin out of the cage. She had sustained several nasty wounds on her legs, and one on her shoulder, but, in a way, she was lucky to escape with her life. A fifteen-year-old boy may not be able to do very much in the heroic line,



but in this instance, one armed with a stout stick and a good voice was able to scare two ferocious hyenas and so perhaps save a life. It was a very exciting affair while it lasted.

The route we chose for our return into England was *viâ* Carlisle, and took us across the sands at Ravenglass, Bootle, in Cumberlandshire. A passage there is only possible when the tide is at its lowest, and even then, on account of the dangerous shifting sands, there is always a big element of risk in the proceeding. Low tide lasts for a very short time, and a big heavy concern like ours had to move pretty slickly to get over before the water commenced to rise again.

On this occasion, to our dismay, our heaviest waggon stuck in mid-stream, and its team of twelve horses (double the usual number) were powerless to move it. Twelve other horses were traced on, but their strength was insufficient to dislodge the waggon-wheels from their bed of sand. Then someone suggested the help of Lizzie, our big African elephant, and "no sooner said than done." When the twenty-four horses had got their shoulders to their work, and all the men we could muster were distributed round the vehicle to lend a hand, Lizzie, at the word of command, placed her head against the rear of the waggon and pushed, and, lo and behold, the vehicle moved and was speedily out of danger. This elephant, I may say, was called upon to do very little work, but by her great strength she certainly saved the situation on this occasion.

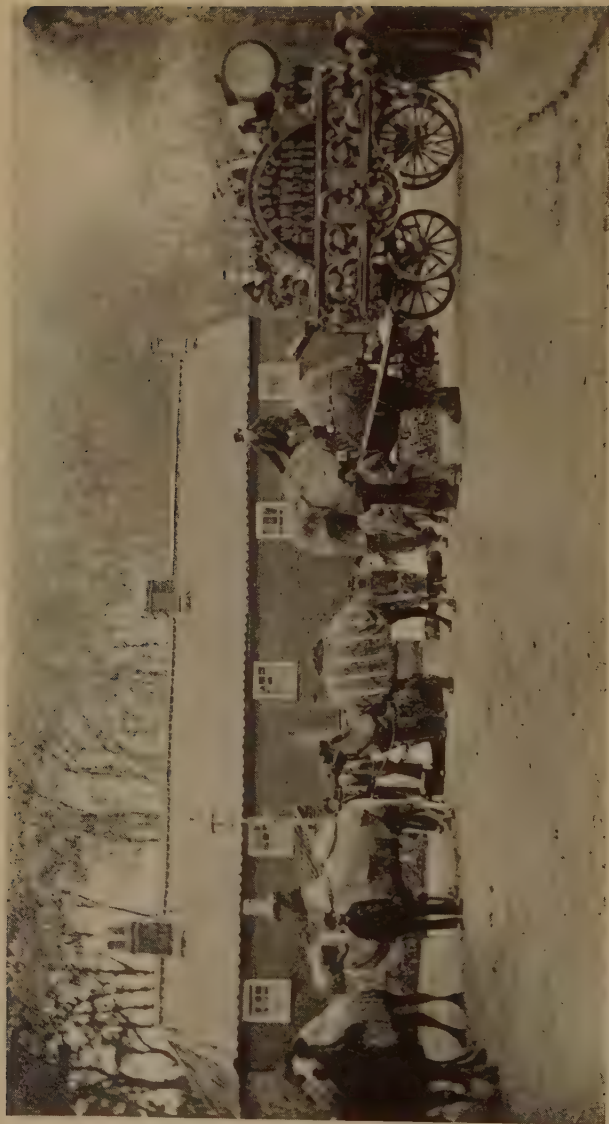
Our next trial was at Oldham on a New Year's

morning. The weather was traditionally seasonable, with keen frost and plenty of snow on the ground. We had brought in the New Year in rollicking fashion and then retired to rest, so as to be ready for the opening of the show on New Year's day. Our sleep, however, was rudely shattered by a terrific gale which sprang up about four o'clock in the morning. There had been a thin coating of snow on our tent or awning which had been thawed somewhat by the heat from the lamps when our visitors were present, but as a result of the frost the surface had become like a huge sheet of glass soon after our guests' departure.

When we were awakened by the storm, my father saw that, in order to save the tent, it was imperative to dismantle it at once. While I have figured in much more exciting episodes than this, I don't recall any which entailed greater discomfort or hardship for those involved. The dismantling of that canvas awning with its coating of ice, which cracked around us like glass, was indeed a grim and uncomfortable occupation at four o'clock on a Ne'erday morning. Luckily we managed to save the tent and open on New Year's Day, but it was a great struggle, I assure you.

When the menagerie was located at the Haymarket at Newcastle-on-Tyne on one occasion I met with a very nasty accident. From the top of a waggon I was assisting in putting on the tilts while two others on the ground were taking in the slack. Suddenly the rope broke away from the canvas just above my hands and I was catapulted from the top of the waggon on to the sets. I landed on my head, and as a result was





BOSTOCK AND WOMBELL'S BAND CARRIAGE, WITH THE NOTED ELEPHANT LIZZIE IN THE SHAFTS, 1887.

insensible for over two hours, but when consciousness returned, I was pleased to find that, except for a splitting headache and an old-fashioned lump on my cranium, I was little the worse for my fall.

While at Tenbury in April, 1875, our African elephant (Lizzie) was taken ill with colic, and, to our consternation, the only veterinary surgeon in the district could not be located. Apprehensive of losing this valuable animal, we called in the local chemist. When he arrived the elephant was in great agony, and seemed to be at death's door. The chemist became very interested in his unorthodox case, and at once prepared a medicine which we promptly offered to the suffering animal. To our delight she swallowed it without a demur. Had she not been disposed to take the medicine of her own accord, readers will readily understand the difficulty we should have in forcing it down the throat of such a huge beast.

To our great relief and joy, the potion produced a beneficial result within an amazingly short time, and in the course of a day or two the elephant was again as fit as the proverbial fiddle. Now comes the sequel.

Four years later the menagerie was back in the same town. As was our custom for "booming the show," we had a preliminary procession through the place in which the elephant, of course, participated. The local chemist, keen to have a look at his former patient, was standing on the kerb-stone watching the entrance of the menagerie to the town.

Immediately she came abreast of him the elephant recognised her former benefactor, swung round,

deserted the formation, and with a "honk" of joy almost rushed the gentleman off his feet. Playfully she then fondled him with her trunk, and the procession was held up for several minutes by the animal's exuberance. I believe the druggist appreciated that token of gratitude from a dumb animal more than a £5 note.

The explanation of the elephant's strange behaviour soon became public, and the unusual incident proved a good advertisement for our show, the local people flocking to see the elephant, which had not forgotten a townsman who had done her a good turn.



## CHAPTER V

*Trials on Snow-covered Roads—A Nerve-racking Journey—Trouble with Hired Horses—Four Teams of Bullocks Requisitioned—Escape of Two Racoons—Five Hours to Cover a Mile of Frozen Road—Pressing Blacksmiths into Service to Sharpen Horses—How “The Dodger” Disappeared and was Discovered Almost Dead.*

I SHALL never forget an experience we had in November, 1875, when we were leaving York, where we had appeared for Michaelmas Fair. Our menagerie had occupied the principal position in Parliament Street, which we were compelled to vacate early on the Friday morning to make room for a market.

When we turned out at 6.30 a.m. we were dismayed to find 3 or 4 inches of snow on the ground, for we had eighteen miles to cover to reach Malton, our next stopping-place. Having sent the horses back to the stables, my father went to interview the official in charge of the market, but his quest was fruitless. Permission to remain where we were for the week-end was inexorably refused.

As we were going into very hilly and cold country beyond Malton my father was seriously perturbed at the prospect on account of the possibility of even deeper snow and of the condition of the roads, but he had no option but to get on the way. He knew that the menagerie had to pass through York eight days later, on our way to Leeds, and in order to ease the

situation my father decided to leave one waggon behind and pick it up on the return journey. This released two horses to assist with the other waggons, and, as a further reserve, my father hired a couple of horses from a local forage merchant.

Two and a half hours behind scheduled time we made a start on the journey to Malton. It was heavy pulling, but we got along steadily to Barton Hill, ten miles from York, where there was an old coaching-house with ample accommodation. Here we stopped and saw to the feeding of our people and horses, the journey being resumed about 3 p.m.

Up to this point the pair of hired horses had led the way and had done very well. They had set out from York half an hour ahead of the others, and we followed the same arrangement at Barton Hill. A short distance from the inn is the incline from which, I presume, Barton Hill takes its name, and there we overtook the pair of hired horses. They had apparently taken an aversion to pulling a menagerie waggon. At all events, they were jibbing and behaving in a most disconcerting manner. The assistance of first one and then two other horses did not help matters. Indeed, this expedient seemed to make the hired team more obstinate. I think they wanted to return to York. We were annoyed at the valuable time being lost, and, to make matters worse, our own horses began to be affected by the spirit of revolt.

The road from this point is more or less slightly on the rise all the way, and as a result of the hired horses' obstinacy we had got only a mile from the inn when darkness fell. In those days we seldom travelled

when it was dark, and accordingly were not equipped with lights. Here we were on a snow-carpeted road with eighteen big waggons, most of them containing live stock, and with no alternative but to push on.

How we managed it I can scarcely explain. It was a most nerve-racking journey. We reached Malton just after midnight with men and horses completely fagged. During the last hour of the journey there was a steady downpour of rain, but, though this added to our discomfort, we were pleased to have the rain as it made short work of the snow.

Owing to the late hour of our arrival and the condition of the men and horses, the waggons were left higgledy-piggledy overnight, and we were called at 8.30 the following (Saturday) morning in order to get them placed in position in the market-place. Saturday was the Statutes or Fair Day at Malton. The snow had gone, and, opening early, we did very good business.

Our next move was to Pickering, which, as the road to it is not very bad, we reached without mishap. The roads beyond Pickering, leading to Kirkby Moorside, etc., were quite a different proposition because of their hilly nature. To accentuate this disadvantage, on preparing to set out from Pickering on Tuesday morning we found on the ground 4 or 5 inches of snow—the quiet old-fashioned snow that lay where it fell for several days.

We had a most difficult and trying time during the whole of that week, but on the Saturday we got to a small place called Sheriff Hutton, which is right in the heart of the Yorkshire Wolds. Here we dispensed

with the services of four teams of bullocks we had hired throughout the week. As the road from Sheriff Hutton to York—a distance of eleven miles—is mostly on the fall, we felt safe in undertaking the journey on our own strength.

Just following the afternoon show at Sheriff Hutton, two racoons got out. The keeper had omitted to fasten the door of their cage. Their recapture, believe me, was no easy task. Assisted by the darkness, they dodged pursuit among the wheels of the waggons, and on hands and knees through the snow a squad of us had to crawl for what seemed an eternity before we had secured them.

We started out on Sunday for York, where we were to rest until Monday morning. Despite the dangerous state of the roads, on which the snow had frozen hard, we made the journey without mishap, but progress was necessarily slow. Near York—I should imagine it is within the borough—there is a small bridge, and from this point the cleansing department had cleared the road of snow, a service they had also performed upon the city streets. The result was that from the bridge onwards the roads were a sheet of ice. The like of them I had not previously experienced, nor have I seen since roads quite so slippery. The waggon we had left at York—it contained three wolves—had been left in the inn yard, with the ostler in attendance, and we had obtained permission to place all the other waggons in front of the inn for the night. This inn was a mile distant from the bridge, but to get over that bridge and reach our stance was an undertaking that, incredible as it may seem, occupied us

fully five hours on account of the slippery condition of the roads. Again men and horses were completely worn out, and as it was seven o'clock in the evening before all the waggons were pulled up opposite the inn, the hope of a long rest at York had vanished.

The following day we had to cover twenty miles, going through Tadcaster, to reach Seacroft, four miles from Leeds. We had left hilly country and deep snow, and had now to contend with roads on which there had been a slight fall of snow, followed by intense frost. In the circumstances, it would have been sheer madness to have set out without having our horses rough-shod, so we prevailed upon two of the biggest (in the way of business, I mean) blacksmiths to commence the sharpening of all our horses at midnight on Sunday, in the hope that we would be able to set out at 7.30 a.m. on Monday.

My father, I ought to explain, had not been in evidence for eight days. He had taken a week off to enjoy himself with some friends. My brother, James William, was ahead of the menagerie in his capacity of contracting and advance agent. Accordingly all the work and worry at this critical time devolved on my mother and myself.

After about two hours' sleep I got up to see to the sharpening of the horses, which had to be taken, four at a time, to each of the two blacksmiths' shops. Over forty horses had to be sharpened, and the job was just about completed when the smiths' regular customers began to arrive and clamour for attention.

The sharpening of horses, when a sudden frost renders this imperative, is frequently a problem for



travelling menageries, because blacksmiths, over-worked by their regular clientèle, are not disposed to accept irregular custom.

On this occasion, however, we solved the problem, and our rough-shod horses found the hard roads easy going, but great care had to be exercised to avoid skids. Our waggons, being long and top heavy, are very liable to skid if they get off the crest of the road. I have occasionally seen them coming downhill on a frosty surface with the hind end in front or alongside the horses.

Our horses had experienced such a severe time since leaving York ten days previously that we decided not to pick up the spare waggon we had left there, but to leave it in charge of one of our staff, who was to hire a pair of horses and follow in our wake later in the day. The man selected for this job was Robert Carlisle, a native of Edinburgh, who was well known as a pedestrian, having trundled a wheelbarrow from John o' Groats to Land's End and *vice versa* in a given time on several occasions. Although he took a dram too much occasionally, Bob was a real honest slave.

When we arrived in Seacroft about 6.30 p.m. every man and horse was once more thoroughly spent, and I felt it would be cruel to ask the staff to fix up and open the menagerie. I expressed myself thus to my mother, but she insisted on opening, and I gave way. This was the only occasion, my mother was wont to assert later in life, on which I showed the least sign of giving in.

The first thing to be done preparatory to opening up was to light the flare-lamps, which provided our



illumination in those days, and inspect the green in the centre of the village that was to be the site of the show. We found the green quite level, but very rough underfoot as the result of having been trampled by cattle prior to the frost. We pulled our waggons into a formation somewhat resembling a square, and, having erected the ridge, pulled over the canvas, which had become as stiff as a board with the frost. With the lighting of some more lamps and a fire we were ready to receive patrons.

My mother's determination to open the menagerie was not for the cash that would accrue, but in the interests of the live-stock which had been greatly neglected the previous day. With the opening up of the show they got the attention that was their due, and I recognised that my mother was right and I wrong. We opened about 8.30 p.m. and entertained a fair crowd of visitors, and the animals, after receiving careful attention, were shuttered up again by 11 p.m.

Up to this time there was no sign of the wolves' waggon we had left behind, and, having learned in response to a wire that it had left York about 11 a.m. with four hired horses, we were naturally a bit anxious regarding it. But, because we were all so utterly worn out, I arranged for an old native, whom we provided with a coke fire, to await the arrival of this waggon, and to give the driver directions as to the stabling and feeding of his horses. The waggon put in a belated appearance at 2 a.m., but as I was sound in well-earned slumber I did not hear its arrival. This waggon, I may say, was divided into two, only one half being occupied by the three wolves.

When we turned out at eight o'clock in the morning we were, of course, pleased to find that the spare waggon had at long last arrived, and we decided to have a look at the wolves, which had been absent from the collection for ten days. When the shutters had been removed the wolves were found to be all right, but one of the staff on entering the other half of the waggon, in which there were sundry articles and straw, made an unexpected discovery. Among the straw he found the apparently lifeless body of a man, who was at once identified as our lampman. We immediately recollected having missed him when we left York the previous morning. This fellow had justifiably earned the sobriquet of "The Dodger," and on that account we had not been worried by his disappearance, which we regarded as temporary.

Well, here was "The Dodger" in the unoccupied half of the wolves' waggon, as nearly dead from cold as it was possible to be. He was frozen stiff, and was unable to reply to our questions. It seemed odds on his passing away in our hands, but we got him out with all possible speed and carried him to the inn near-by. There he was laid before a huge fire, given stimulants, and massaged for a long time. To our great relief he responded to this treatment and revived, but it was a near thing. It transpired that "The Dodger" had purposely arrived late on the morning we left York and had got into the empty section of the waggon and gone to sleep among the straw. Had an inspection of the waggon not been made before we proceeded on our journey to Leeds, his dodging would assuredly have produced his "last, long sleep."

## CHAPTER VI

*Death of My Father—How an "Old-Timer" Met his End and a Thrilling Sequel—My Ignorance of Horse-flesh—How I was Victimised at Bristol Fair—I Bluff my Mother and Lose £27—Elder Brother as Tormentor—A Practical Joke—"Hoist with His Own Petard"—A Lion on Horseback—My Younger Brother's Risky Novelty.*

MY father died at the age of sixty-three at Farnham, in Surrey, in April, 1878, and thereafter the management of the menagerie was in the hands of my mother, who had my eldest brother, James William, and myself as assistants.

A few months after his death, when we were within two miles of Colchester, a farmer's horse, taking fright at our big waggons, backed its cart into the offside leader of the team of six horses, which were pulling the elephant's waggon, and severely bruised his ribs.

This greatly upset the leader, and he thereafter shied at almost every vehicle that passed him, and this, in turn, had a disturbing effect on his companions. This culminated in tragedy six days later.

My father had gathered about him a number of "old-timers," one of whom, John Cuff, of Frome, who was well over sixty years of age, was at this time in charge, and the driver of, the elephant waggon. Drivers in those days acted as their own brakesmen, and, as the brake was at the extreme rear of the waggon, their job was no sinecure.

As the elephant's waggon started to go down a short

hill between Neyland and Earls Colne, in Essex, the old fellow went to the back and was in the act of applying the brakes when the offside leader suddenly shied at a farmer's empty waggon (it was being pulled by one horse attached to a central shaft or pole) which was coming in the opposite direction, and hustled the rest of the team into the near side of the road.

Old Cuff, leaving the brakes, endeavoured to get forward to check the horses, but ere he got their length he slipped and fell and was caught between the waggon and the banking and rolled along until his lifeless body fell clear. Had he been younger and more alert, it is probable he would have saved himself.

I did not see the accident myself, and when the old chap's death was mentioned to me, my informants were singularly sparing in regard to details. I was subsequently to learn the reason for their reticence.

It would, however, have been better if they had told me not only how the accident happened, but what was actually the cause of it. If I had learned that the behaviour of the offside leader had been responsible, I would have suggested a rearrangement of the team to prevent a recurrence of the trouble. As things turned out, it was only when further trouble developed that I learned "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

The following day I ought to have "smelt a rat," but I didn't, and thus let myself in for a hot time. When none of the drivers would volunteer to fill the dead driver's place, I concluded that a little stupid superstition was at the bottom of their unwillingness, and took on the job myself. I was then only eighteen

years of age, but already had several years' experience of driving our big waggons, including that for the elephant, which was the most responsible job of its kind in the show.

All went well with me—and the team—until we were between Earls Colne and Halstead. On coming to a fairly steep hill I went to apply the brakes, just as my aged predecessor had done, when, without apparent reason, the nervous offside leader repeated his misdemeanour.

I shall never forget that runaway as long as I live. Down that hill those six powerful horses thundered, with the huge waggon behind them, at fully thirty miles an hour. The elephant, as usual, was walking, but the front end of the cage was occupied by a magnificent zebra and the back end by a buffalo, while the centre or well was packed with shutters, and other effects used in connection with the menagerie.

I clung frantically to the traces. Otherwise I should never have been able to keep pace with the runaways. At the foot of the hill there is a narrow bridge over the Colne River, and for the life of me I could not see how the horses and waggon were going to take it. A few inches denoted the difference between safety and disaster, and the odds were not fewer than a thousand to one against the former. I fully expected the waggon to be smashed to smithereens against the sides of the bridge and to see the writhing forms of six horses in the pile of *débris*.

It takes some little time to put down these impressions and reflections, but the thrilling occurrence lasted a matter of only a few seconds, though its



duration was at the time to me a nerve-racking eternity.

I need not dilate on the dramatic character of the incident. The escape of that waggon was the greatest stroke of good fortune it has been my experience to witness on the road. It was a miracle of miracles, and I breathed a prayer of thankfulness when the runaways had cleared the narrow bridge.

On the other side of the bridge the road rises in the same way as it falls on the Earls Colne side. The incline brought the runaways to a stop. Thereupon I scotched the wheel, and after a moment's breath had the team on the move again.

I am afraid that, forgetting my prayer of but a second or so ago, I made those horses travel up that hill quicker than they had ever gone up a hill before. I am a lover of animals, and have never countenanced cruelty in any form in dealing with them; but these, you will admit, were extenuating circumstances. The fact of the matter is that I had to let that team understand that someone was in charge of them.

The following day I took the course I should have taken had I been informed as to the cause of John Cuff's death by scattering these horses amongst the teams pulling the other waggons. Gradually they were cured of their disposition to shy at the veriest trifle and were restored with one exception to their old places. The exception was the horse whose fright from the farmer's cart had caused the whole trouble. He never seemed to get properly over it, and so I kept him on the near side, where he could be more easily handled. In these circumstances I had no



difficulty in getting some one to undertake the driving of the elephant waggon.

My father was an expert in horse-flesh and spent a great deal of his time at horse fairs. When he left the employment of Mrs. Edmonds (proprietress of Edmonds', late Wombwell's, Windsor Castle Menagerie) and started out on his own in 1867, he continued to buy horses for her, and, as he also had to purchase horses for himself, he had little time to spend with his own menagerie. He was very fastidious in regard to horses and frequently visited several fairs before he saw an animal he fancied, whereas, when I went to a fair or to a horse sale in later years for myself, if I could not see just what I wanted, I had to be content with the next best, as I was too busy to spend much of my time in horse-buying.

It never seemed to dawn on him, however, that it was advisable to impart some of his equine knowledge to either my elder brother or myself. He never took us to a horse fair or market or even to an auction sale. The result was that, while I claimed even at nineteen years of age to be second to none as a team-driver of any number in handling our ponderous waggons in and out of difficult places, I was absolutely ignorant of the points to be observed when dealing in horses. I had no knowledge of the "tricks of the trade."

By March, 1880, two years after my father's death, our stock of horses was very depleted, and it was absolutely necessary to get fresh animals. My mother, now in charge of the business, told me one day that I must go to Bristol Fair, to replenish our stock of horses. This fair, held on the first Monday in March,

was then a great event, and one which my father had rarely missed.

I protested vehemently against the proposal on the ground that I knew nothing about buying horses and so might buy wrong 'uns, and waste her money, etc., etc. I might have saved my breath. My mother had made up her mind and was obdurate.

My elder brother, I should explain, was acting as advance manager of the menagerie, while I was always with the menagerie and amongst the horses and waggons, and consequently knew more about them than he did.

"Who is to go if you don't?" my mother demanded, and in the end I had to capitulate, although I was not enamoured of the job.

My father, as I have already mentioned, had collected round him a lot of "old-timers," but, as a result of the fatal accident I have described, my mother had decided to dispense with the services of the oldest of them. One of these, Matthew Hale by name, was leaving our employment and returning to his home town of Bristol at this time. In his palmy days he had been a well-to-do horse dealer, and it was settled that, to make good my ignorance of horse-flesh, he should accompany me to the fair in an advisory capacity. I felt a little easier in my mind when I learned of this arrangement.

So off we set together, I with a sum of £200, fifty of it in golden sovereigns and the rest in notes, to buy the required horses. I was expected to bring back three or four good 'uns for this amount of money. When we arrived I had a look round the fair and saw

a lot of magnificent horses, but the prices, £70 to £80, I was not prepared to give ; in fact, I dare not.

Matthew Hale, I may say, kept faithfully to my elbow, but, contrary to my expectation, I received not a syllable of advice from him. He was a taciturn old fellow, and his uncommunicativeness began to ruffle me. Ultimately I gave him the slip, and set to work on my own.

I came across a roan mare which looked the very thing for our work. It was in charge of a farmer, or a man who dressed like one. Thirty guineas was the price quoted to me, and, thinking I was on a good thing, I asked for a trial show. The mare was trotted a little way, and I was impressed, the animal appearing to me to be sound in every member. Then I haggled over the price for a bit and got it reduced to £27. I paid over the cash—golden sovereigns—on the spot, and felt quite pleased with the bargain I had struck. Then I went in search of Matthew, and, having dug him out, told him of my purchase.

“Lord,” was his amazing response, “ye shouldn’t have done that.”

“Why not?” I hotly demanded. “It’s a good mare and will suit us down to the ground. I am not going to pay the fancy prices they’re asking for the others.”

“Oh, but ye shouldn’t have bought that one,” he reiterated, eyeing the roan mare ever so suspiciously.

“Why?” I bawled, for I was getting properly nettled at the old fellow for opening his mouth pretty wide now that it was too late.

“It’s a plant,” was his mysterious rejoinder.

"A plant!" I echoed. "What's a plant?"

"I doubt ye've been done, guvnor," he explained, "I'm sure it's a wrong 'un."

"Plant or no plant," I shouted, "I've bought the mare, and I've got to get her home. I'm going to buy no more. Come, we'll take her up to the station and load her."

"All right," said he, "ye know your own business."

There was a long incline to the station at Bristol, and before we were half-way up it was all too apparent that I had been the victim of a "plant." The roan mare was a rank bad 'un—it was broken-winded; in fact, what is known as a roarer.

Her "piping" going up that hill was something to remember. I was torn between rage and dismay. I had been badly "done" and felt horribly humiliated.

"Here," said I to the veteran, after my mental earthquake was over, "I can't take this — thing home with me. I should never hear the end of it. You take it back to the fair and make the best bargain you can with it, but get rid of it by hook or by crook. Don't bring it back to me; I never want to see it again."

With that I left Matthew with the broken-winded roan mare and took the first train home to the menagerie, which was then at Pewsey, in Wiltshire. I was a disconsolate youth. In the train I pondered a very deep problem. The details of my "plucking" must be kept from my brother at all costs, but the cost happened to be £27. How was I to explain away the expenditure of that amount without having an animal to show for it?



PRIOR TO THE TRACTION ENGINE, THE ELEPHANT WAGON AND ITS TEAM, 1890.

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In my own name in the Post Office bank I had at that time rather more than would have made good the deficiency, but immediate withdrawal of £27 was not possible. Seven days' notice, I think, was necessary. Therefore, I had to look elsewhere for a solution. Who would be prepared to lend me £27 until I had withdrawn that amount from the Post Office bank?

It was then I thought of a giant named Johnny Tollett, an Irishman, who was privileged to follow the menagerie and exhibit as a side-show. He was indeed a giant, his weight being about 35 stone. He was, moreover, a good-hearted fellow, and, knowing that he had money, I considered he would be the most likely to solve my problem.

I arrived between shows, between five and six o'clock in the evening to be precise, and darkness favoured my plan. The side-show proprietor happily did not fail me. He gave me twenty-seven golden sovereigns, which I was to repay to him out of my Post Office savings, and undertook to keep the deal a close secret. Within a few minutes I had returned the £200, £50 of it gold, just as I had got it, to my mother.

"There's your money, Mother," I said. "I have had no luck. They are all far too dear for us, and—please don't ask me to go on such a job again."

My mother, a self-willed woman, remonstrated with me, declaring we must have horses, no matter who bought them.

Before proceeding further with the story, I ought to explain that when I went to the fair I looked pretty much the part of a horse-dealer, a pair of top boots,

which I had never worn at any time, having been borrowed from one of the staff to give me the appearance of the "real thing." In due course, I drew money from the Post Office bank and repaid the amount advanced to me by the side-show man. So far so good. I actually congratulated myself on my 'cuteness, and forgot to think of my loss of £27. But I was not allowed to forget my little bit of deception. My elder brother, James William, who acted as advance agent, generally put up at hotels and thus came in contact with commercial travellers and farmers, horse-dealers, and others. Whenever possible, he returned to the menagerie for the weekend, and his visit following my visit to Bristol Fair was unfortunate for me.

Among the first items of interest he blurted out in front of my mother and myself was that he had met a horse-dealer who told him that he had seen me at Bristol Fair, and that I had bought a beautiful roan mare. I could have fallen through the floor, if it were possible, or even have struck him, but the part of the tactician, rather than that of the pugilist, was appropriate to the situation my brother had created. And so I began to bluff breezily.

"How the devil could I buy a roan mare?" I exclaimed in incredulous tones. "It's a cock-and-bull story you've got hold of. Ask mother; go on; ask her if I bought a roan mare. Did I not give you back the whole of your money, mother, and tell you all the horses I saw were too dear?"

And my mother, no doubt very puzzled, nodded a feeble affirmative, and the bluff silenced James William

for the time being. But the following week-end he appeared with precisely the same story, as given him by another horse-dealer he had met in a different town. I might add that years ago in the Bristol district every second man one met was a dealer ; in fact, it was said that they slept with one eye open.

James William quoted colourful details to prove the authenticity of his story. He declared I had been seen wearing top-boots, and quite looked (he emphasised that word !) the part of a horse-dealer. So again I tried to bluff—not him, for he knew he had the truth, but my mother. This battle of wits went on for a number of week-ends, and there is no doubt that James William, though not disposed to give me away to my mother, kept repeating the story to make me squirm—or bluff.

To expedite the yarn, it was not till ten years later, by which time I was in business for myself, that my mother learned the truth. It came from my own lips in the course of laughable reminiscences, but, to answer the question which has no doubt formed in your minds, she *didn't* repay me the £27, the loss of which at the time was a distinct hardship on a youth of nineteen.

I had almost forgotten to complete the yarn as it affected the "old-timer," who, sent with me in an advisory capacity, landed me in the cart with his taciturnity. In accordance with my instructions, he returned to the fair with the roan mare and managed to dispose of her for £18. So far so good, but, alas ! He was a victim of the same gang as I. They bought the horse back from him, but later relieved him of the

cash in a "pub." So a rank bad 'un proved a very good speculation for an unscrupulous gang.

This was a good lesson to me, the cost of which, in the retrospect, appears cheap and reasonable. Subsequently I did quite a lot of buying, but we generally managed to have the animals on trial first, and bought them on the road as we went along. I have purchased hundreds of animals since the Bristol Fair *fiasco*, and, on the whole, have been very lucky. Horse-dealing is, nevertheless, a great lottery.

A rather amusing incident occurred at King's Lynn in 1880. We had at that time two very nice young male lions, each about eighteen months old. They were very much alike—until one approached them. Then one saw the difference. One was exceptionally tame, and could be handled by any one, but the other was as savage as its companion was docile. We were trying to get these animals used to collar and chains, and had been taking them out of their cages and tying them up to poles in the centre of the menagerie whenever an opportunity for this occurred. We were endeavouring to train them for a special performance.

On a certain Sunday, on which day, although it was a day of leisure, we always took the opportunity to give the animals all the exercise possible, these two lions had been taken out of their cage and tied in the centre of the menagerie as usual. This practice not only gave the youngsters exercise, but it also permitted the drawing of the partition of their cage and the giving of more room to their neighbours.

The docile animal had been fondled by the majority of the employees, and the other by very few of them,

and only by those who moved cautiously and were prepared to risk a little. In due course most of the keepers went off for their mid-day meal, and while they were away several of the remainder of the staff, of whom, I am bound to confess, I was one, conceived the idea of changing the position of the two young lions at the pole, that is to say, to put the savage one where the quiet one had been, and *vice versa*, knowing that when the men returned they would approach what they believed to be the docile lion with the intention of fondling him.

The brunt of this practical joke was intended particularly for a man who rejoiced in the name of Canterbury Jim, and, sure enough, he accepted the bait. The first of the staff to go for dinner, he was the first to return, and in coming into the menagerie he made straight for (as he thought) the quiet lion.

The animal, having its back towards Canterbury Jim, did not observe him until he was actually on the top of it, so to speak. As quick as lightning the lion raised himself and, with an angry growl, dug its claws into the keeper's trousers just below the waist, and pulled one leg of the trousers off entirely and split the other from top to bottom.

All this took place within a few seconds, and quite a scene developed. It was with great difficulty we untied the unruly lion and restored him to its cage an hour later, when we closed up for the afternoon. Our trick may have been a foolhardy one, but a great deal of practical joking was indulged in at this time. Canterbury Jim was more given to it than any other, but when he was, so to speak, "hoist with his own



petard," he lost some of his enthusiasm for prank-playing.

The lion which we had utilised to teach Jim his lesson was never taken out again on collar and chains, for he became exceedingly nasty. The other, however, continued to be well-behaved, and was frequently taken out of his cage, but, unfortunately, about two months after the incident I have described, he caught a chill when cutting his big teeth (a rather dangerous period for all carnivora) and succumbed.

In writing the above I was reminded of a young lion which I had in my own menagerie about 1891. I trained this lion to leave its cage, mount the back of a skewbald pony, and ride around the menagerie. The "Lion on Horseback" was certainly a big attraction, but I made a mistake in selecting too small a pony. The result was that the weight of the lion swayed the pony from side to side, and the lion had difficulty in keeping its balance, and, after eighteen months' run of this item, I deemed it prudent to withdraw it from the programme.

My younger brother, F. C. Bostock, had a full-grown, though small, lion that rode horseback in a proper barred arena, while he also had a full-grown tiger that left its cage, mounted the back of an elephant, and rode round the menagerie amongst the audience. The latter performance took place in 1892, and was, in my opinion, a very risky one.



## CHAPTER VII

*My Courtship by Correspondence—A Rogue of an Elephant and a Disappointment—An Unfortunate Error and a Foolhardy Feat—Lioness Accepts my "Invitation" to come Outside—History Repeats Itself—I Ask for Increase and Accept only Half of what I Receive—How I Met my Wife.*

IN due course my fancy, like that of every normal young man, "lightly turned to thoughts of love." Indeed, by this time I was in the throes of courtship, chiefly (and unfortunately !) by correspondence, the young lady on whom I had cast amorous eyes being my cousin, Miss Elizabeth Bostock, who resided in Leek, Staffordshire, which was, I may say, the original home of the Bostocks.

In September, 1880, the menagerie was due to pay Leek a visit, and I, because of love's lustre, and my elder brother, James William, because Leek was the ancient home of the Bostocks, impressed on my mother the desirability of augmenting the menagerie and making a "grand splash" on this occasion. She was loath to listen to our advice, but ultimately she yielded so far as to authorise the purchase of a young male elephant from the late William Cross, naturalist, of Liverpool. This animal Mr. Cross described as a very good one, being very quiet, etc., etc.

Male elephants after a certain age are much more difficult to handle than those of the female gender. My mother, knowing that the youngster we proposed

to purchase from Mr. Cross would, like every other baby elephant, grow rapidly, opposed the transaction, but after a time sanctioned it on the distinct understanding that my brother and I shouldered all responsibility in the matter. James William and I did this quite cheerfully.

It was arranged that the elephant should be railed from Liverpool to Stafford, and so arrive on the Saturday morning prior to the Monday on which we were to proceed to the town of Stone, where we were to show before going on to Leek. Saturday morning arrived, but no elephant. A wire to Cross produced no reply, but when half of the staff were still a-bed, the addition to the menagerie turned up about seven o'clock on Sunday morning. He was securely tied to the rear of a heavy dray drawn by three powerful horses. Jumbo had had to walk the sixty-five miles between Liverpool and Stafford!

We guessed at once the sinister significance of this arrangement. An attempt to rail the elephant had ended in failure, and Cross's only alternative was to send him along by road. My brother and I, remembering my mother's antipathy to the addition, deemed it prudent to keep our counsel to ourselves and to make the best of what seemed likely to turn out a very bad job. 'The responsibility, we had been forewarned, was ours; we were the sponsors of the "scheme of expansion."

We had the dray pulled into an hotel yard, where there was a convenient and commodious loose-box to hold the new arrival. He was at this time quite tractable, but, since he had trudged sixty-five miles,

his reasonable frame of mind could not be taken as a criterion to his normal behaviour or disposition. He was glad to get a place in which to lie down, and passed into the loose-box without demur.

But the following morning the fun began. In anticipation of developments the lorrymen had cleared out at once, despite the fact that their horses, like the elephant, were absolutely done up. We learned later that they had skedaddled to a point one mile out of the town and rested there. This, of course, was to make sure that the elephant would not be tied to the back of their dray for the return journey; they had been well tutored before leaving Liverpool.

Lizzie, our big African (Abyssinian) elephant, which generally pulled the band carriage from place to place, was still to the fore. On Monday morning we got everything ready to proceed to Stone before tackling the young male elephant. No sooner was he untied than he dashed into the yard and out on to the street, but fifty yards or so beyond Lizzie, whom he had passed, he stopped. After apparently considering the situation, he walked back to her side, when he was promptly secured to her by a very strong rope attached to her neck.

At Stone, Lizzie, as usual, was placed in the waggon she occupied while the menagerie was open to the public, and the young chap was tied to one of the wheels of this waggon, but such a hullabaloo did he kick up that we forthwith decided to have done with him. For me he seemed to have a particular antipathy, and I had to be very careful when I went near him. He was, indeed, a holy terror.

"You will never be able to send him by train," declared my mother when I had announced my decision to send him back to Mr. Cross.

"Don't you worry, Mother," I replied. "He came by road, but he is going back by train—dead or alive!"

"Oh," she replied, "I know your determined spirit. It's all very well for you to talk like that. You will never get him in a train."

"He is going by rail," I reiterated doggedly.

We ordered a horse-box for next morning, and got the rascal up to the goods yard by again tying him to the big African elephant. Directly he saw the truck, it was patent that trains were not one of his pet fancies. The evolutions he performed were wonderful—but inconvenient.

Some people imagine an elephant is lethargic and ponderous. If they had witnessed this youthful Jumbo's impromptu performance, they would have revised their opinion. One moment he was on his hind legs, the next on his fore, and anon he seemed to be clear of the ground altogether.

I was determined, however, that he was going back to Liverpool by rail, and proceeded to put a plan into operation. With considerable difficulty we got a strong rope round his neck. This was then led through the window to the far side of the horse-box, where a squad of men clung tenaciously to it and took in slack at every opportunity, using a buffer as a capstan.

Ultimately by this means we got him close to the box, and, in anticipation of a successful issue, I dashed

into the truck and took up a position behind one of the partitions. Jumbo followed at a brief interval. Perhaps a desire to be avenged on me facilitated his advent to the box, and if that trunk of his had been allowed free play, I should have been reduced to a pulp.

Whenever he put his feet on the side of the horse-box, which was acting as a gangway, this was slowly edged up, and the young elephant was a prisoner, his vocalised resentment then being something terrible to hear. After placing the partition in position I had practically to climb over his back to get out, and I assure you I was extremely thankful to get out of that elephant's reach. But I was not vengeful; I sent three of our staff with him to assist in his unloading at Liverpool.

I also wired to Mr. Cross to have a strong lorry in readiness to hitch him up. His behaviour during the journey was so boisterous that by the time he reached Liverpool he had broken one of his tusks and was completely exhausted and gave no trouble at disembarkation, but no doubt by the time he was on trial with another menagerie he would have recovered his spirit. His ultimate destination, however, was America, whither he was transported in a very strong teak box. This was a rogue of an elephant if ever there was one.

Thus we went to Leek minus the little elephant which was to be a big attraction, and my brother and I were grievously disappointed over it.

After an engagement, lasting seven and a half weeks, at the Agricultural Hall, London, we undertook a tour



in the west of England, during which I witnessed one of the most daring and, at the same time, most foolhardy exploits with wild animals in my experience. This was at Bath.

We had at that time two tigers which were very much alike in appearance, but very different as regards disposition. They were kept in different waggons, but it so happened that each occupied the front end cage of its wagon. While one of the animals was very wild, the other was very tame, and had actually been brought up in the company of a small dog. At Bath, because of its aristocratic flavour, we put on a novelty in the way of a special feeding of the animals in the afternoon, for which we charged increased prices. When the feeding was finished, and the animals had had sufficient time to clean the bones, my mother requested that the little dog should be placed beside its companion, the tiger, this comradeship invariably evoking the admiration of our patrons.

The man instructed to do this work on this occasion was one named Thomas Bridgeman, who had only recently been engaged as assistant trainer. He had no previous experience of menagerie work, but in the short time he had been with us he had shown distinct promise. He was a big powerful fellow of good appearance, and at that time was steady and regular in his habits.

Unfortunately on this occasion he placed the dog in the cage of the ferocious tiger instead of in that of the docile one. The sequel at once indicated his error. The tiger immediately fastened on the helpless dog, but, without a moment's hesitation, Bridgeman sprang



into the cage without a weapon of any kind, and, by means of a piece of consummate bluff, rescued the dog from the tiger, which was bent on devouring it. His heroic action, however, was without avail, for the little dog died shortly afterwards.

I am certain that Bridgeman, who later became known as Captain Cardona, the "Lion King," would, had he considered the situation for a second, never have entered that cage, but his action, though the result of an impulse, was plucky in the extreme, and he received many congratulations on it.

An incident which happened during feeding time at Cardiff a year previously has just come to my mind. Here too, as usual, an extra charge had been made for witnessing the feeding. When those who did not desire to see the spectacle, or who did not desire to pay the extra charge, had left, I staged a little display with a piece of meat on the end of a fork. As I passed along the cages of the carnivorous animals I was wont to remark in jocular fashion, "Better let them come outside and help themselves!"

On this occasion no sooner were the words out of my mouth than one of the two lionesses occupying a cage in the first waggon lunged against its cage door and caused it to open. (Doors of cages now open inwards only instead of both inwards and outwards, as this old-fashioned one did.) Headlong among the patrons toppled the lioness, but, strange to say, the public showed no signs of panic. Indeed, having heard my "invitation" to the animals, I am inclined to think they regarded it as part of the show, which, however, it wasn't, the cage-door having been left unsnibbed

through an oversight on the part of a local joiner who had been repairing the cage-floor earlier in the day.

When the public sensed that this display was unintended many of them promptly lent a hand in getting the lioness back to her cage. This we succeeded in doing by forming a sort of corral with a number of shutters used to cover up the front of the waggon, the lioness ultimately springing back into its cage of its own accord. I had previously had the presence of mind to close the cage-door to prevent the escape of the other lioness. Then when this had been partitioned off, the door was opened again to allow the fugitive to return. This she did after fifteen minutes of liberty, and we swung the door to by means of a cord which had been attached to it for the purpose.

It generally happens that when wild animals, after being in captivity for some time, contrive to escape, they are, at least for a time, much more frightened than the public themselves, although, as I indicated, on this occasion our patrons displayed no fear, but entered boldly into the spirit of the thing.

I was married in August, 1881, and it did not take me long to discover that I had got a treasure of a wife. Indeed, I feel that I ought openly to acknowledge how much my wife has been, and still is, to me. Her advice, always kindly given, has been invaluable to me, and has steadied me in some of my rash moments, while, when things have gone wrong, she has been an ideal comforter. I shall all my life feel indebted to her, and I am delighted to say that she is still with me.

Soon after we had been married, I thought it only right that I should safeguard my wife's future some-

what by insuring myself. It occurred to me that any day I might come to grief, because whenever there was trouble, such as an animal breaking loose or becoming unruly, a runaway horse (and we had plenty of these taking fright at the elephants and camels in those days; what a difference nowadays when horses are used to all sorts of road nuisances), or even a good fight (and we had a few of these), I was usually right in the thick of the trouble. The advice of a friend also directed my thoughts to insurance, and thus it came about that I took out an endowment policy for £1,000, payable at fifty years of age, which cost me £38 5s. 10d. per annum—rather a daring thing to do seeing I was receiving only 40s. per week and a small perquisite. Moreover, fortnightly pays, due to my mother's forgetfulness to pay me at the end of each week, were frequently my experience. This was very inconvenient for me; indeed, at times my wife and I were in a state of penury. But I had hopes of an increase, and, as I neither smoked nor took intoxicants, I thought I would risk this big insurance.

It was, however, a struggle, and five months later I tackled my mother seriously for an increase. I knew that my elder brother, who was acting as advance manager, was getting £6 per week and had all travelling expenses paid. This was when we were in France (I will deal with this trip later), and my brother was provided with an interpreter and assistant, a French gentleman, named Vissieur, who was paid £8 per week, and travelling expenses.

I thought there was something unfair in this arrangement, so I wrote to my mother a nice little

note saying that as a married man with responsibilities (my elder brother was single), I was having great difficulty in managing on my salary, and I did not think it was right that Mr. Vissieur, who, as well as my elder and better educated brother, was enjoying the life of a gentleman, should be receiving £8 per week, while I, who had really to bear the brunt of the whole show, should be paid so little.

I don't know what my mother thought of my epistle, but I do know that on the following Saturday my wages were accompanied by a note which read, "Herewith your salary, £8—the same as Mr. Vissieur gets." I was amazed—and pleased; but my wife and I decided that I was not worth £8 per week, so I returned half of the amount to my mother with a note which read, "Herewith please find £4, half of the amount you sent me. I could not think of taking more than this."

This extra 40s. per week was welcome and useful, and it enabled me to put by a little against the inevitable "rainy day." Although I did not know it at the time, this was the case of history repeating itself. As already indicated, my father was at one time agent in advance of Edmonds' (late Wombwell's) Royal Windsor Castle and Crystal Palace Menagerie, when it was owned by Mrs. Edmonds, my mother's eldest sister. While acting in this capacity about 1858, he struck a place called Rhyader in Central Wales—an old-fashioned little town through which the menagerie had necessarily to pass and in which there was at that time only one hotel, the proprietor of which, a Welshman, owned, or almost ran, the town.

To this gentleman my father was obliged for a stance, stabling, etc., and his charges were very exorbitant. To get them reduced my father declared, among other things, that the menagerie would not draw £40 in Rhyader. The hotel proprietor declared that this was all nonsense, and stated that he was prepared to give double that amount for the takings. Thereupon my father agreed to accept the offer, provided the landlord gave stance and stabling free, and a contract with these conditions was duly drawn up and signed.

This was certainly a great liberty for my father to take. He had never adopted such a course before, and it was entirely unauthorised on this occasion, but he thought he had effected a good stroke of business after he had seen the unpromising character and size of the little town. Had the telephone or telegraph been available at this time, my father could have consulted his employer, but as his only means of communication was by letter, and it would have taken the better part of a week for a reply to have reached him, he decided to act on his own in the matter.

The deal completed, he announced it to Mrs. Edmonds in a letter, and no adverse comment was made on it by her, she also at that time being under the impression that my father had scored. The landlord, however, was a shrewd "Taffy." He had bills printed in the Welsh language and had them sent by his own post-boys for miles around. These bills announced that, at enormous expense, he had induced Edmonds' (late Wombwell's) great menagerie to pay Rhyader a visit, and had, in fact, engaged this great



show for the day, and no one should miss the opportunity of seeing it, etc., etc. The result was—splendid business for the landlord, not only at the hotel, but also at the menagerie, the takings being nearly a third more than he had contracted to pay.

This was more than my aunt, Mrs. Edmonds, could stand, so she wrote severely reprimanding my father for the great liberty he had taken, and the upshot was that my father tendered not only an apology, but his resignation. This brought instructions for him to return to the menagerie at once to explain matters. He obeyed and on his arrival told my aunt that, having displeased her, he would not feel comfortable in her employment any longer, and, having some time previously received an offer of a similar position at double the salary he was then receiving, he was bent on leaving.

My aunt asked him to produce evidence of his offer, and my father did so. It was from a rival, Manders' Grand National Star Menagerie, which collection, a very fine one, was financed by a very wealthy turtle merchant of Liverpool, and on seeing the evidence of the offer my aunt told my father to return to his post, for which he was to receive the salary offered by the rival menagerie. My father agreed, and the increase he received enabled him to save money and eventually start in the menagerie line for himself.

Before he received this increase my father was paid at the princely rate of £3 3s. per week. Out of this salary he had to pay his hotel expenses—and as representative of the renowned Edmonds' menagerie he was expected to, and did, put up at the best hotels—



and had also to pay for his horse at livery, which in those days cost 3s. per day. The result was, I have heard my father say, that he could never afford more than two meals per day, but he revelled in his business, and was immensely proud of his job as advance representative of Edmonds' (late Wombwell's) Royal Windsor Castle and Crystal Palace Menagerie.

Some time before I was married I had rather an exciting and painful experience at Stockport. A very fine old wolf had torn a hole in the floor of its cage close to the bars, and I decided to repair this from the outside without removing the animal, which would have been pretty difficult.

I was in the act of driving home a nail with a hammer in my right hand and with my arm well under the bars, the space through which the animals are fed and watered, when the old wolf darted across and seized me by the wrist. I did my utmost to wrench my hand free, but the animal kept a tight grip, and when an elderly man on our staff, who was at that moment chopping sticks and was the only other person in the menagerie at the time, came to my assistance, there was a sort of tug-of-war going on between the wolf and myself, my arm, unfortunately, acting as the rope.

The old man aimed a blow at the wolf's nose with the chopper he carried, but at that moment the wolf had the advantage in the tug-of-war, and the result was that the back of the chopper struck my wrist. The probability of a more accurate aim following, however, scared the wolf, and I pulled away a badly lacerated wrist. If the wolf had been young with a

full set of teeth, instead of old, I am afraid I should have left my right hand in its mouth.

Next day I fell ill with rheumatic fever, to which I had been subject since quite young, and was hurried to my uncle's home in Leek, which is quite close to Stockport, where I got every attention and made a speedy recovery.

I have mentioned that this incident took place some time before I was married. The truth is that it was on this visit to my uncle's that I first met the lady who was destined to become my wife.

## CHAPTER VIII

*James William Proposes Tour of France—My Mother Opposes, but Ultimately Yields—My Search for Suitable Vessel—Stormy Passages and Long Delays—Why we Lost Insurance on a Horse—French Object to Paying to see Animals Fed—I Return to England to take Delivery of New Waggon—On Getting Back Find that Menagerie is Coming Home—A Trying Experience—Loading the Elephant.*

**B**Y the time I was well and on the road again, my elder brother had conceived the idea of taking the menagerie to France. My mother was not enamoured of the project, but in the end she succumbed to the eloquence of James William, who led her to believe that in France we should strike a veritable El Dorado, Sunday shows, which were taboo in this country, being especially popular there.

Prior to going to France with my mother's menagerie in March, 1882, I had intimated to her that I intended to start a small menagerie of my own the following year, and had actually ordered a front entrance, knowing that this took longer to make and complete than the waggon that I should want, which were ordered later.

James William could speak a little French, and this promised to be an advantage in touring France. Immediately it had been decided to take our menagerie across the Channel, he, being a great talker, soon spread the news abroad, and there were few in the business who did not know of our plans.

Our initial difficulty, when we began preparations

for the trip, was the fact that none of the regular cross-Channel steamer services would transport us, a discovery which somewhat cooled my elder brother's enthusiasm for the proposed trip. But my mother declared that as he had told everybody we were going to France, to France we must go. "If *you* cannot get a boat, your brother will see what he can do," she announced with acidity.

Considering my youth and inexperience of shipping affairs, this was rather a tall order for me, but I tackled the job with right good will, and, after a good deal of hunting around, I struck a firm of London shipowners, Townsend by name, who gave me quite a lot of assistance.

The reason none of the cross-Channel steamer services would agree to transport us was the fact that the menagerie was all top-heavy deck cargo. There had quite recently been a disaster in the Channel which was attributed to such a cargo, and the companies were taking no further risks.

My objective was, therefore, a vessel with a hatchway sufficiently large to take the biggest item in our outfit and so avoid deck cargo. Ultimately I discovered such a ship, S.S. *Denia*, which was at that time lying at Southampton, where I had to go and see her. She had a hatchway 26 feet by 10 feet, which was good enough to take any of our waggons, with the exception of that for the elephant. The elephant's waggon, we ascertained, would go into the hatchway, but, being a well waggon, it stood so high, even when taken off the wheels, that the hatches could not be placed in position.

I accordingly in March, 1882, chartered this vessel, which had to make four trips to transport the entire show to Le Havre. On the first and last voyages the cargoes were very light, as on the first we only sent just what we could spare, so that we could keep the menagerie open two more days, instead of being closed, while on the last voyage we had only three waggons that we could not crowd on to the ship on the two previous journeys; and very good passages were made, but it was a different story on the other two trips, on both of which I was unfortunately a passenger.

The accommodation aboard S.S. *Denia* for passengers and horses was not quite so suitable as her hatchway was for our waggons, there being neither sleeping quarters nor dining-room for our staff, nor stalls for our horses.

On the second trip it was after we had got well past the Isle of Wight that the ship began to pitch and toss, much to the discomfort and alarm of the twenty-six horses we had on board. Being without proper stalls the animals were thrown hither and thither like shuttle-cocks, some of them kicking violently to add to the difficulties of the staff, who, including myself, were all thoroughly sea-sick.

In the midst of my troubles I was informed that the captain desired to speak to me. When I arrived on the bridge he remarked, "Well, I am afraid we are in for a very bad night. What do you think of it?" When I replied that I did not think much of it, he continued, "I do not fear for the ship, although I should feel more satisfied if the hatchway with your



elephant waggon were properly fastened down, but if we were to do that your horses and other animals would be suffocated. What do you advise?"

I replied that, as I knew nothing about maritime matters, I must be guided by him. "Well," said the captain, "my advice is to turn round and lay off in shelter beside the Isle of Wight until the storm abates."

"If you think that is the proper thing to do, better do it at once," I remarked.

"Well," rejoined the captain, "I am pleased you are guided by me, because if we go on I don't think many of your horses would be alive by the time we reached France."

Accordingly the ship was turned about, and within an hour or so we had got into fairly calm water and had dropped anchor. In the circumstances, however, we ought to have returned to Southampton, for, as the journey was supposed to take only ten hours by this boat, we had brought but a few provisions with us. As it was, the delay amounted to nearly thirty hours, but we contrived to make our scanty rations suffice.

My elder brother awaited our arrival at Le Havre, and, after unloading, I returned to pick up what I had reckoned would be the final cargo. But a fourth trip turned out to be necessary.

Our experience on the third trip was almost identical with that on the second, the delay on this occasion in the shelter of the Isle of Wight amounting to eighteen hours, so that I shall not readily forget my elder brother's enthusiasm for a tour in France.



The horses were all insured against loss in the course of the voyage, and when we got them all safely to Le Havre we considered our luck was in. But our self-congratulations were premature, for the very last horse to be lifted ashore by the crane reared and dropped dead the moment he walked out of the box in which he had been put ashore. And we got not a single penny of insurance instead of the £60 we expected, for the horse had been *landed alive*.

Our experience of France was not what we were led to expect it would be. The roads were very good, but the heat during summer was intense, and the journeys between the places were very long as compared with our experience at home. The small towns and villages we took on the way were not worth while, and the journeys were too long for our heavy and horse-drawn menagerie to avoid these, whereas in Britain some of these are good; but the larger towns in France, especially on Sundays, yielded fairly good results.

I have two very good reasons for remembering our visit to Le Mans in May, 1882. It was there my elder son was born. His birth had to be registered as a British subject within twenty-four hours, failing which he would have been subject to military service with the French Army.

It was at Le Mans, too, that our trainer fell ill. He was a big coloured man, known by the soubriquet of Gabriel, and he performed with our lions. He was out of commission for several weeks, and as none of the others on the staff would volunteer for his job, I had to step into the breach. I had, of course, under-

taken quite a lot of animal training of all kinds *in camera*, but I confess that I never fancied exhibition in public. Work "behind the scenes" has always been more to my liking, and I was very pleased indeed when Gabriel returned to his post.

The extra charge for witnessing the feeding of the wild animals, which we had always been in the habit of asking in this country, and which was properly advertised in France, did not go down well with the natives. The menageries to which they had been accustomed had three different prices of admission, and the patrons were packed into long narrow places, where, once in, it was with difficulty one could get out by one's self. The French shows also depended a great deal more on performance than we did, but they couldn't compare with us in regard to the size of menagerie or the number and variety of the animals exhibited. They, moreover, usually stopped for a week or two in comparatively small towns and travelled by train, whereas we journeyed by road and had many one-day stands.

Our French patrons considered, when they had paid for admission, they were entitled to see the feeding of the animals at the conclusion of the performance without extra tariff, as was the custom in France, and when the announcement was made that those who wanted to witness the feeding would be charged half a franc, our difficulty was to collect the money. Gendarmes had on several occasions to be brought in to settle the matter, but we experienced a change for the better after a visit to a place called Barentin, near Rouen.

Horseflesh was in those days very expensive and very difficult to get in France, as it was then even more extensively used there as human food than it is to-day, as will be seen from the following article culled from a London newspaper :

“PARIS, *February 14th*, 1892.

“CONSUMPTION OF HORSEFLESH IN PARIS—  
STARTLING STATISTICS.

“It is calculated that at the moment horseflesh is the staple article of food in one out of every three households in Paris, and there is reason to believe that if the rise in the price of butcher’s meat which has been brought about by the new tariff, continues, the customers of the horse-butcher will represent at least two-thirds of the entire population.

“Some interesting figures on the subject are published here to-day. They emanate from the Prefecture of Police, and may, therefore, be considered authentic. There are within the fortifications of Paris no fewer than 184 butchers’ shops where no other meat is allowed to be sold than the flesh of horses, asses, and mules. They are nearly all situated in the outlying and most squalid quarters of the city. At these establishments during 1891 there was retailed for human consumption the flesh of 21,231 horses, 275 asses, and 61 mules. All these animals, before being slaughtered, were examined by a veterinary inspector. Out of the total number presented for examination in the course of the year, 754 were rejected as unfit for food. The retail prices range from 1½*d.* to 10*d.* per lb. : a fillet of horse or donkey costs 10*d.* per lb. ; the average price is therefore almost 5*d.* per lb.—hence the popularity of these ‘boucheries hippophagiques’ among the poor. The question naturally suggests itself, Whence is this large

supply of horseflesh derived? For there are no public markets at which horses are bought or sold for slaughter."

The above will give you an idea of the difficulty we had to face; and when one considers that we required almost 4 cwt. of meat daily (and we had been in the habit of buying worn and done horses in Britain for an average of about 30s. (at that period), and had the skin to realise on after), what a great difference and difficulty there was! At Barentin our carnivorous animals had been two days without meat, and it was absolutely essential that they should have it. Accordingly our butcher and an interpreter had been sent into Rouen to procure the necessary supplies. There were, of course, no motor cars in those days, and the train services in France were very bad.

The train by which our keeper and butcher returned from Rouen was much behind time, with the result that half of our patrons had gone before it arrived. The meat, to save expense in carriage, had been boned in Rouen, and was quickly transferred to a shutter, cut up, and given to the hungry animals.

My mother was still in the pay-box wrestling with the French money, and, indeed, half of the lighting had burned itself out, as we had been waiting so long for the meat; and when the feeding was finished an elderly gentleman went up to my mother's counter and laid down half a franc (5d.), and every mother's son and daughter, following behind, did likewise. From this time onwards, after the last performance the announcement was made that the show was all over except for the feeding of the animals, to see which an

extra charge of half a franc would be made payable as they left the building by patrons who remained to see it. We had no more trouble in this matter, but the French people certainly did not like the method of collecting the extra cash we had employed in our own country for so many years.

While we were in France my mother ordered two new animal waggons from the Bristol Waggon Works, and when they were ready I was sent back to take delivery of them, purchase stock to fill them, and also buy horses to pull them, as we preferred English horses, which were, of course, quite an attraction in France.

All this, after a lot of difficulty and worry, I managed to accomplish. When, on their arrival by train in London, the waggons were put on their wheels, it was found that they were too high to go under the shedding at the side of the quay. The result was that we had to take them by road four miles down the river and then load them on to barges which were run alongside the Boulogne steamer.

But my luck was still out. It was found that the cranes at this point were incapable of lifting the waggons, so, after the steamer had taken aboard all her other cargo, she had to proceed with the barges to another dock, where a more powerful crane did the needful. These arrangements caused me much worry and loss of time, and cost my mother a lot of money.

My anxieties were not ended even at Boulogne. The waggons were landed by a crane in an outlandish spot, and left on the quay without the wheels being



placed in position. To rectify this omission I had to employ manual labour, and, as I spoke very little French, it was no easy matter for me to get the work done. Once on their wheels, the waggons were then taken to the goods station, about two miles distant, and loaded on two trucks by means of an overhead crane and the breathless labour of two aged porters. This job was carried through in a real blizzard of wind and snow, and, since the porters knew not one word of English and I could speak but little French, my position was unenviable.

I have given you all these details of my tribulations in order that you may appreciate the state of my feelings when on my arrival, with the new waggons, animals and horses, at Creil, near Chantilly, where the menagerie was located for that day, and whilst unloading the waggons, I beheld the familiar figures of Messrs. Read and Bailey, from the Agricultural Hall, London. They had come over to tempt my mother to bring the menagerie again to their World's Fair at the Agricultural Hall for the winter, and, as France had not exactly proved a bed of roses, she eventually succumbed to the temptation. After all the trouble I had taken to get the new waggons across to France, her decision fairly surprised me and knocked me off my feet, but I had to accept the inevitable.

Our return sea journey was from Calais to Dover, and the ordinary cargo boat, on which we were refused a passage on the outgoing journey, consented to bring us back. The loading up of the huge waggon containing the big African elephant (Lizzie) is the only incident of the return journey calling for descrip-



tion. This was a most alarming experience, I assure you.

The crane at Calais had no steel or chain slings long enough for this waggon, and the shipping people had perforce to use a coil of new rope to lift it. This was wound round and round the vehicle, and passed over the big steel hook at the top of the crane. Along with the trainer, I went in beside the elephant to give her a little confidence and to keep her as calm as possible. My premonition of trouble was fulfilled. Immediately the weight of the waggon was on the rope it stretched unconscionably, and I shall never forget my experience as we were lifted aloft.

With steel ropes or chains it would have been possible to have maintained the equilibrium of the waggon, but with a stretching rope—gee whiz! a switchback railway wasn't in it with that experience. Up and down and backwards and forwards swung the huge waggon, and it seemed an age before we were dumped on deck.

As for the poor elephant, she was frightened almost to death. I thought she was going mad, and there was excuse for her behaviour under the circumstances. Her distracted trumpetings were something terrible to hear, and it was a great relief to everyone when the job of loading the waggon was completed. Once aboard, we gave the elephant warm gruel, with a bottle of brandy and a number of delicacies, and in a short time got her restored to a normal frame of mind.

We had a good passage to Dover, but experienced a very bad time getting from there to London by road,

owing to frost and snow, but we completed the journey in time to open on Christmas Eve. The menagerie remained in London for seven weeks, after which we made tracks for the north of England, in the early spring of 1883.

## CHAPTER IX

*My Last Tour with my Mother—A Bear in a Washhouse—Tasmanian Devil Escapes—Captured by Fishermen who Prepare to Exhibit Him to the Public—Captors Refuse to Return the Animal—I Call in the Police and Succeed in Recovering Animal at a Price—Fishermen Arrive Seeking my Blood.*

DURING my last tour with my mother's menagerie, in 1883, a very exciting affair happened at Grimsby, where the menagerie had been exhibiting in the market-place for three days. We were roused about three o'clock in the morning by a tremendous din. I got out of bed, put on some clothes, and went outside, to find a policeman perched at the top of a set of swings erected near the menagerie. He was shouting at the pitch of his voice that a bear had broken loose and was running about all over the place.

Where the bear was at that moment the "Bobby" could not tell me, so, after putting on some more clothes, I went to investigate. I had a sneaking belief that the nocturnal prowler seen by the "man in blue" was of his own imaginative creation, but I had hardly finished speaking to him when the escaped bear thundered past me down towards the bottom of the square formed by the menagerie waggons.

I thought then it was time to arm myself with a weapon of some sort, so I seized hold of a bass broom with a handle, which is a fairly useful instrument in

cases of this kind. The fact that the enclosure had been dismantled—we were leaving that morning—facilitated the pranks of the bear, who was now rushing backwards and forwards and in and out among the unconnected waggons. He was not ferociously inclined, but seemed highly pleased with his liberty and apparently intended to have a high old time of it.

Leaving him alone for a bit, I went to investigate his method of escape, for I suddenly remembered that in the same cage with the bear were another bear and three wolves. I found that he had forced a big hole in the back of the waggon, and was relieved to find that the other bear and the wolves had not sought their liberty by the exit made by him. I gave them no second chance, for, with the assistance of some of the menagerie hands who were now on the job, I barricaded up the hole with shutters, and then we went in search of the fugitive.

We organised our forces, and found that the bear had slipped through the passage at the rear of the menagerie and pushed open the door of a washhouse which gave on to the kitchen of an occupied dwelling. Luckily, however, the inmates were abed upstairs when Bruin made his unorthodox and impolite entry. But the noise he made awoke the sleepers, who, because of the proximity of the menagerie, promptly guessed the cause of the commotion, with the result that the females became frantic with fright, and locked their doors to prevent the bear's advance into their apartments. In fact, the noise made by the bear had awakened everybody in the

square and brought them, in a state of alarm, out of their beds to their windows.

If we had followed the bear through the door we would have chased him into the kitchen and probably up the stairs, and thus have made matters worse for the inmates of the house. A keeper and I accordingly got through the washhouse window and cut him off from the kitchen. Previous to this the staff had trundled across from the menagerie a travelling or shifting den, and placed it against the washhouse door. In a short time the bear, which was full grown, was driven back into the den and was soon restored to his own cage. The hole in the latter was roughly repaired with sheet iron, and we moved away according to time-table, but—very tired and sleepy !

This reminds me of a peculiar experience at Llan-dudno in August, 1881. We were there for two days in glorious weather, and about 9 a.m. on the second day two fishermen came to the menagerie and asked for the boss. When I had been called, they asked me if we had lost an animal during the night, as they had caught one. The shutters of the waggons were not then open, but I made a hurried inspection and saw no place where any animal could escape, so I informed the fishermen that I did not think we had lost an animal.

When I further questioned the men, they were not disposed to give information in regard to the animal they had captured, but three hours later, when the shutters of the waggons had been removed, the keeper discovered that the Tasmanian Devil, an animal not much bigger than a badger, but very

vicious, was missing. He had gnawed a hole in the floor of his cage, and escaped.

I now realised that this was the animal caught by the fishermen, and I despatched one of our employees into town to try and trace them. He returned to say that he had found the fishermen, who were making hasty preparations to exhibit the Tasmanian Devil in a small tent on a piece of waste ground just off the sea front. He had spoken to them about the animal, mentioning that it had been lost from the menagerie, and, instead of handing it over, they had threatened him with violence. They had informed him that they had been to the menagerie and been told that no animal was missing!

My mother, on hearing this, sent me to recover the animal. I found the fishermen just on the point of opening their impromptu show, bills having been posted outside to explain how the animal had been caught and making much of the fact that it was the first of its kind ever seen in Llandudno. It was to be seen for the modest expenditure of 2*d.*

I went about the job of recovering the animal as diplomatically as I could. I explained to the fishermen that when they called I was not aware that one of our small animals had made a hole in the floor of his cage and escaped, and they, of course, must know that that sort of animal was not found in Wales. The fishermen, however, remained obdurate and insolent, and threatened me with violence if I did not take myself off.

Accordingly I went to the local police station, where I explained the situation. Very little sympathy, how-



ever, was forthcoming from this quarter, although the officers knew all about the capture and proposed exhibition of the animal by the two fishermen.

Eventually, however, a constable was detailed to accompany me to the fishermen's tent, and after a good deal of recrimination I recovered the Tasmanian Devil at a cost of £3. Its captors wanted £5, but £3 was my limit, and the fishermen were far from satisfied. Along with a number of their cronies, they came to the menagerie during the evening, looking for trouble in general and my blood in particular, but, as I was due to be married three days later, I was prevailed upon to take cover, and we moved to Colwyn Bay, according to arrangement, the next morning.

## CHAPTER X

*I Set up in Business for Myself—The Value of an Attractive Front—Harness too Large for my Horses—Hiding their Chafed Shoulders—My Brother, Frank Charles Bostock, Deserts Me—His Successor, Sargano—Successful Tours in Scotland—Magical Effect of Brandy on Ailing Elephant—Opposition from Small Shows—Few Changes in Staff—No “Ca’ Canny” Policy—A New Sargano.*

IT was in September, 1883, after much deliberation and preparation, that I left my mother and the dear old show, in order to start out with a small menagerie of my own, and amongst other features I had prepared was a very nice front entrance (referred to in a previous chapter), which was built to my own specification. I had made up my mind that my menagerie was not going to suffer, as, I believed, my parents’ menagerie had suffered, from lack of an attractive front. I decided that the first essential to success was a good frontage, and resolved to do the best with the show afterwards. And I found this policy paid.

I took delivery of my new front at the Agricultural Hall, London, towards the end of January, 1883, although I was not setting out on my own until the autumn. My mother and brother, when they beheld my new front, were so enamoured of it that my mother induced me to allow her to use it until a similar, but larger, entrance had been built for her menagerie, and I was very pleased to acquiesce. It

was at Malton, Yorkshire, on September 10th, 1883, that my mother's new front entrance arrived from Burton-on-Trent, where it was built, and the very railway trucks that brought my mother's front to Malton took my front, living carriages, etc., back to Burton-on-Trent, where my animal waggons were being built, and where I was going to prepare for my own start.

I made my debut as proprietor of the "Grand Star Menagerie" at Tutbury, five miles from Burton-on-Trent, where all my waggons had been made. It was not an auspicious opening, but I was pleased to have made a start. I had only six horses, which had been discarded by my mother. They were willing, faithful creatures, but long past their youth. To a friend, a veterinary surgeon, named Thomas Bazeley, in Trowbridge, Wilts, I had entrusted the purchase of seventeen other horses at the Michaelmas Farm Sales, and in readiness for their arrival I had bought a cartload of cast-off harness from a brewery firm in Burton-on-Trent, but the horses bought for me were very different from the brewers' horses which had worn the harness I had purchased. The harness was much too large for my animals, but I had to make the best of what I could get for the capital I had at my disposal.

My caravan set out from Tutbury to Ashbourne, eleven miles distant, over a very wet road which was more or less of an incline all the way to the latter town. It soon became evident that between the wheels and floors of my new waggons there was not sufficient clearance, and the horses were really pulling against a brake that was slightly on all the time. But that was

not all. Owing to their collars being too large, several of the horses before we reached Ashbourne had chafed their shoulders, and I was in a ferment lest this should be discovered and trouble with the authorities result.

We had a very satisfactory night at Ashbourne, everyone being pleased with the show, which, if not large, was certainly well selected and attractive. Next day I had to make twelve miles to reach Derby, but happily the road thither is more or less on the fall all the way, and it did not unduly tax my horses with the chafed shoulders. Immediately on arriving at Derby in a deluge of rain I had these horses rushed to stables in order to hide their chafed shoulders from prying eyes.

I returned to Burton-on-Trent the following day (Sunday), starting at daylight, and at *midnight* the builder of my waggons turned his wheelwrights and blacksmiths on to the job of increasing the clearance between the wheels and the floors. This he did by fixing 2-inch blocks under the springs of each of the vehicles.

From Burton-on-Trent I went to Nottingham Goose Fair, which is the best fair in Great Britain, and there, no doubt due in large measure to my attractive front, I did exceptionally good business for the size of the menagerie I had, and part of the proceeds, I may tell you, was promptly invested in better-fitting harness for my horses.

My younger brother, Frank, who was in later years known as Frank Charles Bostock, the Animal King, and who was then undoubtedly the greatest showman





WILLIAM DELLAH, THE ORIGINAL SARGANO.

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this country has ever produced, was at this time acting as my animal trainer and performer. He had left my mother's menagerie, as he and my elder brother, James William, did not pull very well together, and he had come to me. As he was then only eighteen years of age and was a handsome-looking fellow, he proved a great attraction in my show. But, alas and alack! he had fallen in love, and, as I was heading north for Scotland, I was getting further and further away from London, where his *fiancée* resided. The result was that he left me at Sunderland and returned to my mother's menagerie near London, and I had to be my own animal trainer and performer until I happened on a successor, a Yankee named William Dellah, who had previously had a lot of experience with animals. Him I christened Sargano.

From Sunderland I journeyed by the East Coast and border towns *viâ* Galashiels and through Edinburgh and Stirling on to Perth. At this time there were a number of menageries on the road—three large ones and five or six smaller ones. The former were well known, and usually kept to the main roads. My menagerie was at this period, of course, one of the "smaller fry," and was as yet unknown. I found I did very well, considering my expenses, in small and remote towns which had been untapped by the larger and better known menageries, and this led me to decide to proceed north from Perth *viâ* the old Highland route—Dunkeld, Pitlochry, Kingussie, Grantown, and on through Inverness as far north as Wick and Thurso.

No menagerie, I ascertained, had been up the High-

land road or north of Inverness for twenty-five years, and so I increased my charges for admission in these remote and thinly-populated parts, where, to help me further, my expenses for stances, etc., were very much lighter than on the old beaten tracks.

The journeys, however, were long and the roads heavy. In fact, some of the roads at that time were grass-grown and soft. There were no motors in those days, while because of the presence of the railway there was very little vehicular traffic on the roads. One example of the roads I have in mind was the stretch of twenty-five miles between Blair-Atholl and Dalwhinnie, the first half of which, leaving Blair-Atholl, is all on the rise. My journey over that road I shall never forget. About midway between the two places and about ten miles from "nowhere," while we stopped to bait, my only elephant was taken ill with colic. I had paid £450 for her only six months previously, and, being without the funds to buy another, things really looked very serious for me.

In my living-carriage I had about half a bottle of brandy which I kept for emergencies, and this we forced down the elephant's throat. The effect was magical. The elephant was on her feet in less than half an hour, and I was greatly relieved, I assure you. Her death would have been a terrible blow to me at this stage. She walked, although very slowly, into Dalwhinnie, where our patrons, though not very numerous, were delighted with the show. Some of them had walked twenty miles to see it.

When we got above Inverness we met all sorts of opposition from the proprietors of small shows, such

as a small circus, waxworks, side-shows, hobby-horses, etc. It transpired that, when the Grand Star Menagerie's bills and posters were displayed fifteen days in advance of our visits, the public had no use for the small shows. They held up their cash for the menagerie, and the proprietors of the small shows stayed behind in the hope of getting some of it when the menagerie arrived. This, however, made the question of stances an awkward one for us, but we surmounted the difficulty and did good business because we had the menagerie, and, in fact, the show the public wanted.

This incensed the opposition so much that they all put their heads together and produced and posted a bill attacking me, the principal allegation being that I was charging in the Highlands 2s. for what the people in England got for 3d. In this, of course, there was absolutely no truth, but the libel did me more good than harm, and, finding that the game was up, the malcontents gradually dropped from my route.

My show, I may say, was clean and well conducted. It was not very large, but my zoological collection and clever performing animals suited the public taste. Shortly afterwards I augmented my stock of animals by purchasing from the menagerie of my aunt, Edmonds' (late Wombwell's), which was disposed of by auction at Liverpool in July, 1884, my purchases reaching me at Forres, Inverness-shire. From there we journeyed to Aberdeen, where we did immense business, and afterwards we toured through Forfarshire and Fifeshire, and then went on, for the Christmas and New Year holidays, to Edinburgh.

We enjoyed a successful six weeks' run in the Scottish capital (my menagerie stood in the Grass-market), after which I proceeded to Glasgow and got a stance in the Saltmarket for a month, from the Corporation, after which I put in another month in the New City Road on the spot where the old Zoo buildings now stand. At both places I did very well.

Scotland, I may say, set me on the road to success, and, having found that I had "struck ile" in Stern Caledonia, I did not stay long away from it. Leaving Scotland, I took most of the towns in Yorkshire, and got to Hull Fair about the middle of October. Despite keen opposition from one of the old-time menageries at Hull Fair, Beverley, Bridlington, Filey and Scarborough, E. H. Bostock's Grand Star Menagerie, which by this time was as large as any of the others, and much more modern, did extremely good business.

I afterwards went to York and struck northwards, knowing that the other menageries were going south, as they did not like Scotland. As I have pointed out, however, I liked Scotland, because I had been received very cordially by the people, so I was hurrying back to it. I reached Edinburgh in time for the Christmas and New Year holidays (1885-86), although we had had a very severe time and heavy travelling between Morpeth, Alnwick and Berwick-on-Tweed, on account of snow on the hills and other troubles.

It is, believe me, no picnic to be on one of these journeys at this period of the year with responsibility for the welfare of live-stock and staff. The latter, I may say, always clung to me, and changes in my personnel were few and far between. Perhaps the

men liked me, or perhaps I was a good leader, but in those days I had no such thing as a "Ca Canny" policy or eight-hour day movement to contend with. My employees were loyal in the extreme. Generally speaking, we were a hard-working, happy family.

In Edinburgh we again stood in the Grassmarket, the Town Council giving us a very cheap stance on account of the educational nature of our show. We did excellent business, especially during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

After a stay in Edinburgh lasting six and a half weeks we journeyed across to Glasgow, taking the towns *en route*. From Glasgow, where we repeated our Edinburgh success, we penetrated into Lanarkshire, and again did splendid business. Afterwards we went as far north as Tain. Our journey was in the nature of a triumphal tour. The public remembered the value I had given them on my first visit, and their welcome could not have been heartier. Success was mine all the way.

By this time I had lost the services of my Yankee trainer, who had been succeeded by a West Indian, to whom, to avoid losing valuable printing I had in stock, I passed on the name of Sargano, which was tacked on before his surname of Alicamoussa. Whilst at Monymusk this coloured trainer was rather badly mauled by a group of young lions, and, as there happened to be an Aberdeen newspaper reporter present at the time, the incident obtained a lot of profitable publicity for my show.

When I returned to England I found I was getting in the way of my mother's menagerie, so I retraced my



steps to Scotland, and on this occasion went as far north as Keith. I again visited Glasgow and then crossed to Belfast, where I enjoyed a successful stand of three weeks. A tour of Ulster followed, and this also was fairly remunerative, but the success of that undertaking was clouded by the death of one of my children, nearly four years of age, at Ballynahinch, Co. Down, in September, 1887. This upset my wife very much, but she stuck it bravely while we proceeded south to Dublin, where we spent three weeks, our stance being in Great Brunswick Street. We found, however, that we were not doing nearly so well as we were in either England or Scotland, and, moreover, had a great deal more to put up with, and so we decided to return to Belfast. After a stand in the Royal Avenue, Belfast, we crossed to Scotland and proceeded once more to Edinburgh for the Christmas and New Year holiday season, following which we went to Glasgow and then on to England and Wales.



## CHAPTER XI

*My Mother Retires and I Purchase her Menagerie—I Adopt the Name of Wombwell—Two Menageries on the Road—A Miraculous Escape—A Comedy of Camouflage at a Canal Bridge—Novelty of Electricity—I Purchase Portable Engine and Dynamo—Sargano Alicamoussa Gives Notice—A Nasty Sequel for me—My Last Conspicuous Appearance in Wild Animal's Cage—Captain Rowley, Sargano's Successor—Roof of Tent Struck by Lightning.*

FOLLOWING in my footsteps, my elder brother, James William, who by this time was married, could not agree with my younger brother, left my mother's services in 1885, and set up in business in France. Frank Charles, who, you will recollect, deserted me at Sunderland in April, 1884, had returned to mother's menagerie, but after a few years mother and he did not pull very well together, as he was too ambitious and progressive.

My mother, who was getting on in years, did not take kindly to Frank's hustling methods and original ideas, and thus it came about that she decided to dispose of her entire show and retire from the business. She, however, dreaded an auction sale, and so, when she told me that she had quite made up her mind to give up the menagerie, I promptly offered to purchase it from her—lock, stock, and barrel—and asked her to let me know the price, etc. She gave me all details, with the exception of the price of her own residential carriage, with which she would not part on any

account, and eventually I closed with her. On February 18th, 1889, when she had completed an engagement at the World's Fair in the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, I took over her entire show. I let my younger brother, Frank Charles, have some of the stock and plant to set up in business for himself, and added some of it to my own menagerie, then on exhibition in Glasgow. This was then known as my No. 1 Menagerie, of which I personally took charge. I then made up another menagerie, No. 2, which I entrusted to the care of my brother-in-law, Frank Bostock, who had been in my service for some time and was fairly well up to the business. Prior to this I had never used the name of Wombwell, but, having purchased the entire menagerie, name, goodwill, etc., etc., the title belonged to me, and I at once began to use it. It will be observed, however, that I had carried on and made great headway in five and a half years with my own name and title—E. H. Bostock's Grand Star Menagerie.

To follow the fortunes of No. 1 Menagerie, we made another trip as far north as Tain. On the road from Dunfermline to Burntisland, I recollect, we had a very nasty experience early in 1889. As we were going down a long hill, leading to the latter town, the four roan horses yoked to the baby elephant waggon bolted and soon overtook the foremost waggon. This they found they could not clear, and to save themselves they swerved into the near side, where there was a low wall to a big grazing field, into which there was a 5-foot drop. Over the wall jumped the runaways, but the waggon, caught as it was by the

wall and the Big Elephant waggon in front of same, drew them up, although the shafts snapped at the point where their weight came on the wall. Apart from these breakages, and a little damage to the horses' harness, nothing serious resulted, and this was accepted as an absolute miracle.

The cause of the bolt we never discovered, but it may have been due to the failure of the driver, who was walking, to apply the brake. On account of this omission, the waggon would gather speed and the horses would, in consequence, run away. We knew that the offside shafter was not to be too fully trusted, either going up or going down a hill, but the other members of the team were perfect cart-horses, and, so far as I knew, were without a fault. Had the waggon followed the horses, the whole thing must have been completely wrecked.

A rather amusing incident occurred shortly after this on our leaving Linlithgow to go to Denny. After passing through Falkirk, we had to go over a wretched wooden canal bridge at Camelon, half a mile beyond Falkirk. This bridge has recently been replaced by a substantial iron erection, but there are still several of the antiquated wooden structures to be seen on main roads around Glasgow, viz., at Castlecary, and in and near Kirkintilloch. When the menagerie, even before we had traction engines or heavy motors, crossed one of those bridges, which were supposed to carry only 3 tons, we had to notify the Canal Company, who immediately sent an old barge to the bridge which was to be crossed. The barge was placed below the bridge and packed up, in the centre, with planks to

reinforce the bridge sufficiently to take the weights of our various waggons.

It fell to our advance agent to make arrangements for these canal bridges to be ready for our crossing. Everything was O.K. at Camelon, and we passed over the bridge. The contract price, given our agent in writing, for strengthening the bridge for our crossing was 25s., but when I went to pay the account I was informed that the price was 50s., the increase, so it was explained, being due to the fact that they had been unable to get the barge usually utilised for the purpose of supporting the bridge. "Oh, no," I replied, "an agreement is an agreement, and I pay no more." "Oh, well," was the threat with which I was met, "you will not take the big waggon over this bridge to-morrow morning." "All right," I said, "we will see about that."

The reader will have gathered that we were returning over this bridge the following morning on our return journey from Denny to Falkirk, where we were to exhibit for two days, Friday and Saturday, and we had to cross the bridge again, on the Monday following, in going from Falkirk to Stirling on our way north. I had good grounds for believing that the "Horatios at the bridge" would be up to some nonsense and I decided to try to be even with them.

Our heaviest waggon and its team of six grey horses, by which it was always drawn, weighed about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  tons, and invariably headed the string of waggons as we journeyed from place to place. On the way from Denny through Camelon there is a long, easy fall to



WILLIAM DUNCAN, PROFESSIONALLY KNOWN AS "CAPTAIN ROWLEY."

*[To face p. 106.]*





the bridge, and a singular rise on the other side. I therefore knew that one good pair of horses in the shafts were sufficient to take this big waggon over the bridge. Accordingly I called a halt and took the six greys out of the elephant waggon and put them into one of the pair-horse waggons further down the caravan, and yoked a pair of brown horses to the elephant waggon. To the elephant waggon I gave third place in the line, while the waggon drawn by the six greys I placed about tenth.

After I had tutored the drivers, we resumed our journey. There was quite a crowd at the bridge, in anticipation, apparently, of some sport. I kept in the background, and away over the bridge went four or five waggons, including the heaviest, the  $8\frac{1}{2}$ -tonner, drawn by the pair of browns, which, almost immediately they got over the bridge, had to stop because of their inability to take their excessive load up the rise in the road.

Other waggons followed over the bridge, but the very moment the six greys approached it, the men in charge of the bridge got busy. When one of them had withdrawn the pin which bolted the two sections of the bridge, his colleagues began furiously to turn the handle, and the bridge opened up just as the foremost of the greys were about to place their feet upon it. This, of course, brought the caravan to a standstill, and I deemed the moment ripe for my appearance. On coming forward I "innocently" asked what was the trouble, and was gruffly informed that I knew perfectly well what the trouble was. "You are not taking that waggon over until the bridge is propped,

and you pay £5—50s. for going over on Thursday and 50s. for going over to-day."

"Nonsense," I replied. "Man, you've made an awful mistake. The elephant waggon is already over, If you don't believe me, go and look for yourself." "Well," asked the man, "what are you doing with the six grey horses yoked to this waggon?"

"Oh," I said, "that is just a joke. I knew you were going to spring a joke on me, so I thought I would get there first."

The crowd, which had gathered round to hear what was to be heard, shrieked with laughter, and the bridge employees, having surveyed each other sheepishly, were constrained to share in the general mirth. By this I knew that everything was all right so far as I was concerned, so I came away with a bit of bravado. "Come on, boys," I chuckled; "down with the bridge or I shall have an awful big action against you for delay, as you have no legal right to delay these vehicles." Down came the bridge, and then the man in charge inquired, "What about payment for yesterday's crossing?" "Oh," I said, "we have to cross over the bridge again on Monday. You come up to see me at the menagerie and we shall not fall out."

The suggested visit was paid, and I paid over a sum of £3 15s. for the three crossings. This incident, insignificant in itself, caused a great deal of talk in the district and boomed our show tremendously.

It was a comedy of camouflage that brought valuable "grist to the mill."

After this tour through Scotland, I made my way

south to the World's Fair at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, and made my first appearance there as my mother's successor.

Barnum and Bailey's great American show was at Olympia, London, during this winter (1889-90), so that we had pretty stiff opposition, but my menagerie was by no means neglected by the public, I assure you. On leaving London we made for the West of England and went as far as Penzance. We had secured several of Barnum and Bailey's freaks, who were anxious for a tour through Britain prior to their return to America, and these helped our business immensely. I might mention here that we all, circus and menagerie proprietors, were scared with the coming of the great American show to our country, but it actually proved a great impetus to our business all round.

Electricity about this time was all the talk, so it occurred to me that to be up-to-date I must have electric illumination. To have this while it was still a novelty would, I felt, prove a draw to the menagerie. I purchased a portable engine and had a dynamo fixed in another waggon, and soon was producing electric light which I first used publicly at Darlington on November 3rd, 1890. This was a great feature, quite a number of patrons coming to see it alone. But oh! the labour daily in transporting this portable engine, which weighed over 7 tons and which was without springs, over soft and uneven ground.

It was also extremely difficult to get the engine fixed plumb with the dynamo in order to prevent the belt coming off. To guard against the immediate cutting off of the electric light in this way, we always kept a

few of the ordinary lights going to ensure that the menagerie was not suddenly plunged into darkness, for if this had happened a panic might have resulted.

From Darlington we journeyed north *via* Newcastle-on-Tyne, Alnwick, and Berwick-on-Tweed, and did splendid business everywhere. Trouble with snow, however, upset our calculations on the journey between Ayton and Dunbar, which are twenty-two miles apart. We lost two days' business, spending one night closed at Ayton and being unable to open the following night at Cockburnspath, as we did not arrive until midnight.

After a rest, we proceeded to Dunbar and thence to Edinburgh, which we again reached in time for the Christmas and New Year's holidays (1890-91). I took risks in following the route I have described with such a heavy menagerie and valuable live-stock, but I got to Edinburgh without mishap. At Edinburgh we once more did splendid business.

We then proceeded across to Glasgow, and it was as we were leaving Bathgate on February 4th, 1891, that I had one of the nastiest experiences in my career. I have already told you that my trainer was Sargano Alicamoussa, a West Indian. He had become immensely popular in Scotland, and success had turned his head and made him unmanageable. The result was that he had made up his mind to leave my employment, and, with the assistance of friends in Edinburgh, to start a menagerie of his own. At the time of the incident I am about to describe he was completing a fortnight's notice.

One of the features of my show had been Sargano's

performance with a big full-grown lion named Wallace and three lionesses. Wallace was a huge, stubborn brute, and if I could eliminate him from the performance I knew I should have no difficulty in finding a successor to Sargano. Accordingly I decided to remove Wallace from the group before we got to Glasgow, as, after we were once fixed there, we should have great difficulty in moving the waggons.

As we had no moving den suitable for Wallace, we had to resort to the expedient of pulling the waggon we desired him to occupy face to face and door to door to the one he was in. We had adopted this course on many other occasions and had very little difficulty, but Wallace was not of the obliging kind. We employed every thinkable dodge to induce him to flit, but all were futile, and it became apparent that our only chance of success was for someone to enter his present cage and drive him into the other.

I called for a volunteer for this job, but there was no response, my men simply gaping at each other. "All right, I'll do it myself," I announced, and forthwith proceeded to tackle the job, which I am ready to admit I should have preferred to have left to another. I don't know if they were afraid of what Wallace would do to them or what view Sargano would take of it.

Armed with a whip and with a board 3 feet square in front of me, I went into Wallace's cage, and after a bit of bluff and much noise and gesticulation on my part, the huge brute turned tail and dashed into his new abode, the door of which was promptly closed by pulling a cord which had been attached to it for the purpose. This simple exit by Wallace, after all the



previous din and fuss, savoured of anti-climax, but I much preferred to have it that way.

It may have occurred to my readers that, since Sargano had not yet left my employment, I could have given him instructions to carry out this work. This incident, however, occurred at 7.30 in the morning, when we were all ready to set out from Bathgate to Airdrie, and he was not expected to lend a hand in getting ready for the road. I did not like the idea of being beaten, because Sargano would have got to hear of it and would have known the reason for shifting Wallace from one cage to another. I may add that this was the last occasion I was conspicuous in the cage of a wild animal, but since then I have, of course, advised and assisted to good purpose from the outside.

Sargano the Second was succeeded by William Duncan, professionally known as Captain Rowley, who did remarkably well, although he had not the fine physique or the appearance of his coloured predecessor. He was, however, a very apt pupil and daring in the extreme, and soon made himself very popular, especially in Glasgow and the West of Scotland as a result of his plucky performance at the Zoo in New City Road. Willie, I regret to record, died of heart trouble in December, 1910, and was laid to rest in Lambhill Cemetery, Glasgow.

But to resume the tour with No. 1 Menagerie. From Airdrie we went on to Glasgow, and obtained the site, just beyond St. George's Cross, on which The Tabernacle now stands. Here, on March 2nd, 1891, the roof of the tent was struck by lightning. Three of the





CAPTAIN FRED WOMBWELL, AT PRESENT WITH THE MENAGERIE.

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centre uprights and four sections of the ridge were broken, but the canvas, which was very wet, was practically undamaged, and we managed to get the repairs carried out by the following day.

From Glasgow we journeyed once more towards my favourite hunting-ground, the north of Scotland, and again went up as far as Tain. From further north special trains, arranged for by me, brought many patrons to Tain to see my menagerie, and from start to finish the tour was an unqualified success.

On the way back we reached Stirling just in time for the Highland Society Show, and, taking up a stand outside the main entrance, did splendid business. At our next stand, Bridge of Allan Games, I bought up a very small menagerie belonging to William Day. I added the live-stock to my own, and, having no need of the effects, promptly disposed of them.

From this point we struck southwards, and, passing through Yorkshire, reached Hull in time for its popular Fair. Then we turned about and reached Edinburgh in time for the Christmas and New Year holidays (1891-92).

During the winter of 1891 we had experienced several severe gales, notably at Lancaster on August 25th, and at Blyth on December 7th. These trying experiences frayed my nerves, but by this time I had an assistant who was able to shoulder some of my responsibilities. He was a youth named H. F. Birkett, whom I had taken on as an apprentice about three years previously. An apt pupil and a willing worker, he quickly picked up the business, and when I now

and again went away to see how my No. 2 Menagerie was getting on, he, along with my dear wife and trusted staff, attended very capably to the requirements of No. 1.

From Edinburgh we again went across to Glasgow, where once more we put up in New City Road, just beyond St. George's Cross. Before I left Glasgow I tried a week's stand at the "classical" Vinegar Hill, and did fairly well.

## CHAPTER XII

*I Purchase a Traction Engine—A Fall of Snow creates a Problem—Taking a Hill by Instalments—Wedding Bells—My Assistant Marries my Wife's Sister—Engine Buries Itself in Reclaimed Ground—Show Lit up with Borrowed Lamps—Almost a Catastrophe near Cumnock—I Buy Another Show—A Rest in London.*

YOU will recollect my mention of the daily difficulty we had in fixing up the portable engine and dynamo which generated our electrical supplies. I had been advised to purchase a traction engine which, besides providing more power for lighting purposes and being less noisy than the engine I then had, would be capable of pulling two of my heaviest waggons, and would thus permit me to dispense with ten or twelve horses.

I had accepted this advice and had ordered a 6 h.p. traction engine from Messrs. Fowler, of Leeds, and this arrived just as we were about to leave Glasgow for a tour of Lanarkshire. In anticipation of the advent of the traction engine I had disposed of a number of my horses at Edinburgh about three months previous, and in Glasgow I found a buyer for my portable engine.

The traction engine was certainly an advance. Besides providing better lighting, it justified the claim that had been made for it by pulling my two biggest waggons under normal conditions. We, however, still experienced difficulty in getting the engine plumb

with the dynamo on the soft and uneven ground, and because we were moving almost daily.

On our sixth journey with the new engine from Larkhall to Strathaven on March 10th, 1892, abnormal conditions caused by 3 inches of snow on the ground created our first real problem with the traction engine. When the horses, after some difficulty, had got away with their loads, we found that the engine could hardly pull herself up the long incline leaving Larkhall, let alone pull our two heaviest waggons.

The wheels kept clogging up with snow, which had to be picked off, and when the waggons had been coupled up and steam put on, the engine's front wheels not only lifted off the ground, but skidded very badly. One never knew where the engine was going to, so it was very dangerous to walk near to its front wheels.

In these circumstances we decided to let the engine go on alone for a distance of about 70 yards, and, having blocked her up—a very difficult job on the slippery snow—run the wire back to the waggons and draw them up to the engine. How often this slow and dangerous operation was repeated I cannot recollect, but we struggled through and managed to open at Strathaven at 8 p.m., the delay having caused us to lose the revenue from an afternoon show.

This experience seemed to indicate that I had blundered in disposing of a number of my horses, but the following day we managed to reach Hamilton, where there was no snow, but a steady downpour of rain which gave us very soft fields to contend with, more trouble with the traction engine resulting.



From Lanarkshire we proceeded as far north as Inverness, but this tour was not quite so lucrative as some of my previous ventures in the north.

I have introduced Mr. H. E. Birkett as my assistant manager. I have now to record another stage in his progress under my auspices. He became enamoured of my wife's sister, and the happy sequel took the usual form of wedding bells at Stirling on August 22nd, 1892.

About this time we were experiencing almost incessant rain, and whenever we had to stand on soft ground the traction engine was a great nuisance. At Dumbarton, which we reached at Fair time, we had to put up behind the other stands in the Park which had been there for a week. The result was that the engine found a very soft spot on reclaimed ground and almost buried itself. The harder we tried to pull her out the deeper she sank. A kindly contractor lent me two lorry loads of short planks to put under the wheels, but these the engine buried like so many matches in the sand and shingle. In the circumstances there was nothing for it but to leave the engine where she was until the following day and get the menagerie ready for the public, illumination being provided by what few lamps we had, and many borrowed ones from the showmen at the Fair.

Tackling the problem of the submerged engine the following morning, we cut a space away in front of it and laid down on a gentle incline several more lorry loads of borrowed planks. Steam was then got up and twenty of our best horses were traced on. At the word of command the engine opened out and the

twenty horses put their shoulders to their collars, and, to my great relief, the engine moved up the slope of planks, and I made sure that she was kept on the move until she was on *terra firma*.

At Barrhead a few days later we had another vexatious experience with the traction engine. We had to negotiate a nasty rise and also rather a sloping entrance to the field where we were to stand, and unfortunately the engine skidded when pulling one of the waggons up the incline, and slipped over the edge of an embankment with the waggon behind it. This entailed much loss of time, horses again having to be employed to drag the engine up the embankment.

Eight days later, September 11th, 1892, when we were about three miles past New Cumnock on our way south we had another trying time with the traction engine. I may here say that I think I had been very unfortunate in the selection of my engine driver, who was aptly known as "Greasy Jimmy."

About three miles out of New Cumnock on the road to Sanquhar there is a long fall into a hollow followed by a steep rise, where we always had to "double up" or assist one another by lending horses from each other's waggons until the lot had been drawn up the hill. As a result of previous experience of this hill, I strongly advised the engine driver to play for safety by taking one waggon at a time, but he pooh-poohed my idea, and, of course, I had to bow to his superior knowledge, as I really knew nothing about engines. If my advice had been turned down by a horse driver, I should have quickly sent him about his business.

Preparatory to the ascent the engine driver halted,

stoked up, and had the engine so full of steam that it was issuing from many parts of it. Meanwhile the faithful horses had been up the hill with half of the waggons and were on the way down to complete their job. Just as I had feared, the engine was not equal to the task of pulling two waggons up the hill, and, of course, it had to stick at the steepest part of the hill. In the circumstances the only thing to be done was to disconnect the back waggon from the front one. This, however, was no easy matter.

We had blocks of a good size over which the engines and loads were gradually backing, while the driver shouted many instructions that were rendered inaudible by the roar of the escaping steam. I got a very large stone from the side of the road and placed it behind the second waggon. This, along with the other blocks, I deemed would make her secure. You will realise, however, that the engine and front waggon had to ease back a little in order to slacken the connecting-pin between the two waggons, and during this operation the second waggon gradually went over the big block. Thus the moment the pin was released, away down the hill, hind end first, tore the detached waggon.

I stuck to the drawbar for several yards and tried to push her from me in order to deflect the waggon to the side of the road, and that final push of mine, trifling as it may appear, I really believe prevented a catastrophe. Just before it reached the foot of the hill, where the horses and men were preparing to take up their final load, the off hind wheel of the waggon struck the bank. This slewed the waggon right

across the road, and over on its side she toppled with a tremendous crash.

I shall never forget the few seconds between the release of the pin and the crash at the bottom of the hill. I had done my best, but I was shudderingly preparing for the worst when this 8-ton waggon would crash through the group of men, horses and waggons at the foot of the hill, and what a sigh of relief I breathed when its wild career was arrested by the bank. The waggon crashed within a few feet of the men, horses and waggons, and I put down this escape as the most miraculous in all my experience.

The engine with half its usual load easily reached the top of the hill, and then came down to assist in pulling the fallen waggon on to its wheels. The fact this had fallen so perfectly level along the main top-sell or frame ensured that it was practically undamaged, and it was also pleasing to find that the animals in the waggon had also escaped unhurt. Within forty minutes we had the capsized waggon on its wheels again, and found that the only damage it had sustained was a hole in one of the shutters of the front den. It had been made by its occupant, a water buffalo, whose feet had gone between the bars at the moment of the crash. The shock of this alarming affair further upset my nervous system, and I made up my mind to dispense with the traction engine at the first opportunity and resume my faith in horse-flesh.

We reached Sanquhar all right, and then journeyed on through Carlisle to Hull, where we arrived in time for the Fair. A short time prior to this a gentleman named Frank Hall, who had started quite a presentable



VIEW ON THE ROAD NEAR DUNBLANE, 1892. IT WAS THE SECOND OF THESE WAGGONS THAT BROKE LOOSE FROM THE ENGINE AND RUSHED BACKWARDS.

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though small menagerie, had enticed my joiner and one of my best animal men to join him. He had procured a second-hand front entrance from a ghost or illusion show proprietor and had it repainted to suit a menagerie. Business, however, had not come up to Mr. Hall's expectations, and, anxious to get out before he lost any more money, he approached me, and I made him an offer for his entire show, provided he delivered it to Selby on October 5th, 1892, where my own menagerie was to be on that date.

I found Mr. Hall's show at Selby as a going concern, and promptly purchased it from him, in accordance with my promise. Mr. Hall certainly had big ideas. He called his show Barnham's Menagerie, and as such I managed to get ground for it at Hull Fair, where, although my own big show and another menagerie were also on the spot, it did quite well. As manager of my new show I appointed Mr. Sydney Braham, who, having been with Edmonds' Menagerie for many years, had an intimate knowledge of our methods of business. He made a capable manager, and I had no cause to regret my purchase of Mr. Hall's outfit.

It was at Hull Fair I fulfilled my resolution to dispense with the traction engine. There I sold it after having had it for only seven months. I had paid a heavy price for it, and, of course, lost a lot of money in selling it. I then reduced my No. 1 Menagerie by one of the heaviest waggons, and stored this at Hull. Thus I had only six fresh horses to buy to bring me up to strength. I also went back to the old flare lamps until the following spring. By this time I was

feeling absolutely worn out, and so, two days after leaving Hull, I acted on the advice of a doctor friend in that city, the late Dr. William Jackson, and left the menagerie to get a few months' rest and change. I went to reside in London, where I fixed up a nice house in Stoke Newington, immediately opposite my mother's house, which I afterwards bought. Even here I was not allowed to rest much, but I escaped the stress of bad weather and the inevitable worries which develop when on the road with a menagerie.

As No. 1 Menagerie was making for London to fulfil my contract at the Royal Agricultural Hall, it was getting nearer me every day. No. 2 Menagerie, in charge of Mr. Frank Bostock, my brother-in-law, went to the north of England and on to Edinburgh and Glasgow, while No. 3 show, which I had just acquired, was sent to Lancashire and Yorkshire.

The work of mapping the routes to be followed by these three menageries devolved on myself, whether I was on the road or settled in London, and it was sometimes a difficult matter to keep them apart and at the same time dodge to some extent the other shows and circuses which were on the road. I also bought all the animals and most of the horses required for my business, so it will be seen that even during my rest cure in the Metropolis I was by no means idle.

## CHAPTER XIII

*Boxing Kangaroo all the Rage in London—I Promise an Agent to Produce Another and Deliver the Goods—A Short-lived Success—Kangaroo Dies of Lockjaw—More Boxing Kangaroos for the Continent, America, British Music Halls, and my own Menageries—A New Attraction—The Wrestling Lion—An Unremunerative Speculation—I Sell Lion to my Brother—He Sends to America, where it is a Great Success.*

WHEN I was supposed to be resting in 1892, the Boxing Kangaroo at the Westminster Aquarium was all the rage in London. (Professor Landerman and his Wonderful Boxing Kangaroo direct from Australia.) This was proving a great attraction, the charge to see same being 1s., after a like sum had been paid to get into the Aquarium. I looked on and *smiled*, because it was obvious to me that, given a saucy male kangaroo—the bigger the better—and a tricky boxer, the rest was child's play.

I did not know very much about vaudeville or music halls, and still less regarding the agents who supplied the “turns” for them in those days (I have learnt a lot since then), but when at the Aquarium, having a look at the Boxing Kangaroo, I ran up against a variety agent, to whom I confided that I could provide another boxing kangaroo for the stage as soon as he wanted it.

This information pleased the agent immensely, and on the spot he made me the tempting offer of £80 per week, with a three months' contract, for a good

boxing kangaroo if I could provide one. Accordingly the following day I made my way to the London Zoo, and then and there bought a fine male boomah, or old man kangaroo—a regular pugilist.

My next quest was for suitable training quarters, and, after some difficulty, I managed to secure these. Then I had to get hold of a boxer, a teetotaller if possible, and certainly one who could be relied on to “do battle” with the kangaroo in his sober senses. The danger of employing a boxer who might give his performance “under the influence” was that he might strike the kangaroo, which would immediately turn tail and spoil the show.

The animal I bought was a splendid fellow, and in less than two weeks from the date of his purchase I had him on the stage at the Trocadero, London, where we used a very open net instead of the usual boxing ring. We had previously tried the animal with foot-lights and full lighting, and a noise resembling public applause, etc., etc., and he had comported himself admirably. Nothing we did upset him, and one of the directors and the manager of the Trocadero, who were present at a rehearsal, went into ecstasies over him.

On the strength of what they had seen they boomed my boxing kangaroo stupendously, in opposition to the Aquarium one, and on the opening night there was a great house, which went into raptures over the turn.

The kangaroo’s performance on the second night was equally successful, and then agents began to buzz around me like bees asking me for the open dates for

this wonderful turn. On the following day, however, I had to leave London to go to Bolton to attend to some matters in connection with my No. 3 Menagerie, and so I deputed the late Mr. J. D. Hamlyn, naturalist, to watch my interests in the boxing kangaroo.

Judge of my surprise when two days later (on New Year's Eve) I received a telegram at Bolton from him informing me that the kangaroo had gone lame, that a veterinary surgeon was attending him, and that he was consequently unable to appear at the show in the evening.

I naturally thought that the kangaroo had overstrained himself and that with a few days' rest he would be ready for the stage again. It was, therefore, somewhat of a surprise, indeed shock, when I received a second telegram two days later announcing the death of the animal.

Thereupon I hastened back to London to inquire into the cause of his death, and this I was not long in ascertaining. I found that the kangaroo had run a splinter of wood into his leg, and that this had produced lockjaw. That was the end of my first boxing kangaroo, who had enjoyed conspicuous success for the brief season of four nights.

This was one of the biggest business disappointments I ever experienced, but, undaunted, I determined to produce a similar turn at the earliest possible moment. My younger brother, F. C. Bostock, and I chased one another all over the Continent, buying all the big male kangaroos we could find. We made purchases in Cologne, Breslau, Aachen, Berlin, Hano-



ver, Antwerp, Rotterdam, and Christiania, and after a few weeks' training had several of the animals out to engagements.

My brother despatched some to the Continent and to America, while I hired mine to music halls in this country, and put one into each of my three menageries. I have to confess, however, that none of these animals was a patch on my original, which I had secured from the London Zoo, and, therefore, did not prove as great a draw as the latter had been in the Trocadero. The principal thing to be observed in training a kangaroo for fisticuffs is to let him think he is beating you and never to strike him ; he will then assume the aggressive all the time and please the public.

When the managers and agents with whom I was coming in contact asked me if I could not provide them with some other animal attraction, it occurred to me to produce and supply a wrestling lion. When I mentioned this idea to them they were greatly enamoured of it, and clamoured to have a look at the turn. I promised to show them my wrestling lion within a week.

In a previous chapter I recorded the defection of my trainer Sargano, who had set up in business for himself. He by this time had come to grief and most of his stock had come to me. Amongst the collection was a very small, but adult, lion with a very presentable mane.

A more important qualification of his for the purpose I had in view was his tameness. Sargano used to get him to stand on his hind legs and put his fore paws on his shoulders, and in this position the lion



would remain as long as Sargano chose or was able to support him.

Sargano had not returned to me with his stock, but as he was idle in London I sent for him and explained my project to him. In regard to the wrestling match, Sargano was simply to get the lion on his hind legs, when he (Sargano) would put his arms round the animal, make a bluff of a wrestle, and after a little, throw the lion. After a short pause the process was to be repeated. Two bouts I deemed sufficient, and it was understood that the lion was to be made to appear the winner of one of them.

Sargano, when he saw there was money in the idea, re-entered my employment. The lion he was to train had been his own special favourite, and he entered with enthusiasm into the scheme. The training took place in the lion's waggon at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, where the menagerie was then on view.

Before the week was up I invited a number of theatrical agents and managers to see my wrestling lion. They were pleased with the show, and I fixed up a two months' contract for its appearance at the Oxford Music Hall, Oxford Street, London, almost at once.

I hurriedly got ready a portable stage to suit music-hall stages, so as to be ready to fulfil the contract, but unfortunately we were unable to get a rehearsal on the stage before the opening day in order to get the lion acclimatised to his new surroundings.

On the Monday morning we erected the cage on the stage and gave a rehearsal with the orchestra in their places, and with full lighting effects, etc., etc., and the

show was fairly successful. When he made his debut in public at night, however, the lion seemed very nervous, and his exhibition was not at all satisfactory.

Fortunately I had given the managers and agents a show in the lion's own den in the menagerie at the Agricultural Hall, and they had seen the act before acceptance, and they could not reject it because of his poor opening performance. On the second night the lion, a bit reconciled to his new environment, put up a much better show, and improved nightly thereafter. He played full eight weeks, and plenty of other engagements accrued.

This, however, was not a very remunerative speculation, as after paying for the lion's transit at the rate of 1s. per mile, fares for four passengers, and the cost of a lot of luggage, carting, etc., etc., very little in the way of profit was left to me, and so eventually I sold the act to my younger brother, F. C. Bostock, who was very anxious for it, and in America it was a very great success, with a British trainer, William Crockett, a native of Edinburgh.

## CHAPTER XIV

*I Rejoin my No. 1 Menagerie—Clash with two Circuses—I Promise Reprisals and Form Mammoth Circus within a Fortnight—I Overtake and Make Short Work of the Opposition—I Show in the Glasgow Olympia on Shares—I Conceive Idea of Permanent Zoo there—Unscrupulous Opposition in South Wales—The Pitch Queered for me—My Bills and Advertisements Copied—My Drastic Measures to Meet the Situation—Exciting Incident with an Inebriated Acrobat.*

**A**FTER the engagement at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, to which I referred in a preceding chapter, my No. 1 Menagerie made direct for Bristol and the West of England. Although I had been absent from the menagerie only seven months, during two of which it had been under my observation in London, it was borne in upon me that my guiding hand was being missed, and when, early in April, 1893, the menagerie got mixed up with two circuses, I could sit still in London no longer. The fact that others were taking liberties with the old-established Bostock and Wombwell's menagerie was extremely annoying, so off I went to see that its dignity was not further affronted. But I appeared too late on the scene to ensure that I held my own on this occasion.

I interviewed the proprietors of the two circuses concerned and found that they were disposed to crow over their score against me. "All right, I will give you all the circuses you require," I promised them, and forthwith made up my mind to incorporate a circus with my menagerie.

In exactly two weeks from the date of that promise, or challenge, I had built up a circus second to none in Great Britain. I knew of a very good circus family, who, on the road with a show of their own, were splendid performers, especially equestrians, but indifferent managers. Almost eighty miles from Bristol I trekked to see them, and, having induced them to accept an engagement and join me, I then went on to London to book further circus talent. Amongst the people I fixed up were the great Hennafoord family of equestrians, now the greatest riding family in America, where they are receiving an enormous salary, and Apollo, the Scottish Hercules.

Having seen to the personnel, I then attended to the details of the necessary outfit, and purchased a big new circus tent, and I can tell you I felt immensely pleased with what I had accomplished in a very short space of time.

The previous year my younger brother, F. C. Bostock, had been running a big circus under the name of Bostock, Wombwell, and Bailey. His wife was a Bailey, hence the use of the last-mentioned name. While in London I met him and found that he was about to go to America and try his luck there for the first time, and when he learned of my new project he offered me his show at a very cheap figure. Impatient to be after the circuses who had affronted me, I closed with his offer, so with an amalgamation of two huge circuses I went in pursuit of the opposition.

I overtook them, and made short work of them. I drove them out of Somerset, Devon, and the West of England in quick time, and they never again attempted

to take liberties with Bostock and Wombwell's. These operations were expedited by the fact that my brother handed over to me a big supply of elaborate printed matter he had in hand for the advertising of his show. I used this and retained the name of Bostock, Wombwell, and Bailey, which my brother had utilised in order to get somewhere near the American Barnum and Bailey title. I had a really splendid show. Transport was my greatest difficulty, but I gradually overcame this, and during that season we did enormous business.

You will recall that I disposed of my electric lighting plant, but by this time I had acquired another portable set, a very compact affair, made by Thomas Green & Son, of Leeds. Its transport required four good horses, but it was all on one load, and its erection at a stand could be very quickly carried out. In providing lighting effects for the circus it was a greater service than it had been in connection with the menagerie alone, and was still regarded as a novelty in many of the places we visited.

We toured all through Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, and right along the south coast of England, after which we struck up towards Hull, which we reached in time for the October fair. Here we ran the menagerie and circus as separate shows, but not long afterwards we dispensed with the latter, as it was too cold for patrons to sit in a circus tent.

The menagerie on its own continued northwards, and once again stood in the Grassmarket at Edinburgh during the Christmas and New Year holidays (1893-94). As previously, we cut across to Glasgow, where the only site I could get was at the Old Barracks



Carnival Ground, which was rented and occupied by the late Mr. George Green, one of the most respected and certainly the most commercial showman I have ever met. I did not like the position, but as nothing else was available, I had to take it. Here we experienced a sequence of gales, which, combined with the poor position we occupied, had a very detrimental effect on business, so that on this occasion we suffered a shrinkage of about 50 per cent. on our usual Glasgow drawings.

During the ten days we exhibited the wind blew incessantly, and, to use a colloquialism, I was properly "fed up." I was longing to get out of Glasgow when an interesting proposition was laid before me. I was approached by a gentleman named Bert Novello, who asked me if I would care to bring my menagerie to the Olympia, New City Road, Glasgow, of which he was the lessee, on a sharing principle.

I simulated indifference to the proposal, but promised to visit the Olympia that night and give him my decision. In truth, however, I was quite keen on the idea, if only to get out of the dreadful wind for a few weeks. When I went down to see the Olympia (it was afterwards known as the Zoo Building), I was not enamoured of it, because it was rough and dirty, but I was so absolutely tired and worried with the unabating storms that I fixed up to bring my menagerie there on a sharing basis.

We opened at the Olympia on February 12th, 1894, and in the four weeks we spent there we did excellent business.

On the night I saw the Olympia for the first time I conceived the idea of a more or less permanent zoo,





BABY AFRICAN ELEPHANT, THE SMALLEST EVER IMPORTED. PHOTO TAKEN AT SUNDERLAND, 1895.

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which, with other attractions, I was convinced, would be a paying proposition, and so registered a decision to obtain possession of this building if it ever came into the market.

Leaving the Olympia on March 12th, we travelled south to Newcastle-on-Tyne, which we reached in time for Easter. Here I restarted my circus, but business was not what I had expected, the position we had to take up being one of the factors against us. From Newcastle we hied back north *viâ* Alnwick, Berwick, and went up as far as Tain again. We did exceptionally well at every place we touched in Scotland, the combined circus and menagerie being an irresistible attraction.

We stopped a week at Dundee and a like period at Aberdeen, the latter visit synchronising with the Highland Society Show at the end of July. Then we trekked southward again in order to fulfil engagements at Nottingham and Hull Fairs in October, at the end of which month I again closed down the circus and carried on with only the menagerie through the counties of Lincoln, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.

After a seven weeks' engagement again at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, we journeyed into the Midlands, and, picking up my circus effects, set out again on March 18th, 1895, with my combined show. We made direct for South Wales, where, to my surprise, I found that another menagerie had coupled up with another circus in an attempt to imitate my show. The wording of their bills and posters was almost identical with mine.

The apparent success of my double show had, I may

say, caused quite a sensation among circus and menagerie proprietors. I have used the term "apparent success" advisedly, for, while the impression had got abroad that I was making a fortune, I can honestly say that this was far from being the truth. True, I was attracting the crowds, but my enterprise was so big and costly that my profits were less than when I was running only the menagerie. Albeit, my show was one to be proud of, but with the honour and glory attached to its ownership there went a great deal of hard work. In addition to looking after the combined circus and menagerie, I had to attend to the route and managerial business of my Nos. 2 and 3 Menageries. The former was at this time in the South of France, while the latter was in the North of Scotland.

The new circus-menagerie combination, I found, was just ahead of us, and very shortly we found ourselves in towns to which it had rushed before us. The result was that we did very poor business, not because we had not the goods to deliver, or because the people had not the cash to pay, but because the competitor ahead of us had been a distinct disappointment to the Welsh folks. I know the Welsh people well, and have found that they are quick to let you know when and if they are not pleased with what you have given them. We were informed by those who did not trouble to come inside that our show was "another swindle," but the audiences we did get were, I may say, immensely pleased with the "fare" we provided. Unfortunately, however, they did not come in sufficient numbers to justify me prolonging my stay in South Wales.

The good opinions of the people who patronised us were of little or no avail in the fresh town we tackled the following day, and it was evident that to follow the route we had mapped out and advertised would have been sheer folly and ruinous policy. The other combination with a bluff show had done well, and I with the real thing was being cold-shouldered.

Our competitors having pushed through the best part of South Wales, were rushing into Wiltshire and Somersetshire towards the West of England, whither they knew I intended going after touring South Wales. I knew they were going. About a score of telegrams I had sent out had produced the information I required, and, having procured it, I decided the moment had come for action.

I did not go to bed that night. Aided by a map, I studied the problem that confronted me, and before morning had decided to turn my show right round and go in pursuit of the circus and menagerie that were spoiling my business. My object was to get up on or ahead of them. This was an almost unheard-of thing for a big, heavy road show like mine to do, but, having studied the situation from every conceivable angle, I decided it was the only course open to me in the circumstances.

So away we went from Brynmawr down the Black Rock Hill, the climbing of which had given us considerable labour the previous day, and reached Monmouth in the evening. Two of my staff I detailed to attend to the cancellation of advertising in towns in our original route, while I sent another man to announce our coming to Gloucester on the following

day. I wired for my real advance agent, but he was a long way off, and had, as a matter of fact, twelve towns advertised ahead of us. He travelled, not in a motor car, as advance agents do nowadays, but in a horse-drawn, covered waggon, which, on receipt of my wire, he put on rail to get ahead of the opposition.

We continued our forced marches, and opened at Gloucester with but two days' advertising in lieu of the usual twelve or fourteen days' notice. Business, as was not unexpected, was bad, but I achieved my real aim in pulling on the opposition in exactly a week from the day I turned round about.

It was at Devizes on May 1st, 1895, I overtook and opened against the opposition who had given much trouble and caused me considerable loss. My competitors were, of course, ahead of me in advertising their show, but my advance agent had made the most of the short time at his command, and it was for the public to decide whose "fare" was the worthier of their patronage. When placed alongside mine, the opposition show was absolutely dwarfed, and though the latter, owing to their arrangements having been made two weeks in advance, were provided with the better pitch, the good folks of Devizes, who had all their wits about them, walked past it and came to my show, which stood in a pleasant field just beyond the opposition stance. The chagrin of my foes when they saw the crowds walking past them and making direct for Bostock, Wombwell's, and Bailey's great United Shows could not be disguised. The clashing of the two shows, with whose literature the town and the country for miles around had been deluged, produced



considerable excitement, and incidentally greater business for me than I might otherwise have enjoyed.

At Trowbridge, the next town on the route, we again pulled up in close opposition. Here again our imitators were the better placed in regard to pitch, but this did not avail them in the eyes of the public, who almost completely neglected their show in favour of mine. The sequel, which I had foreseen, was a visit to me after the afternoon show by the two opposition proprietors. They approached in humble mood to see if an arrangement could be come to whereby we could get out of each other's way. They admitted they had made a mistake, as they had found to their cost that they could not survive in direct opposition to a show like mine. I, of course, explained the annoyance and loss caused to me by their tactics in rushing ahead of me in South Wales, and also pointed out how unscrupulous they had been in practically duplicating my bills, while I did not forget to add that it was the bad impression they had left behind that rendered it suicidal for us to follow in their wake.

"I want the West of England to myself," was my ultimatum, and this the opposition accepted, declaring they were prepared to turn there and then and leave the West of England as my preserve. They also undertook to destroy all their bills which were more or less a copy of mine, and also to alter their advertisements so that they would have no resemblance to mine.

I asked for these undertakings in writing, and within an hour after our interesting interview the requested

document, which is still in my possession, was handed to me.

The following day my opponents turned back, and we were thus enabled to take things easier. We had gone through a terribly hard week in order to get even with our rivals, but opposition of this nature should never be entered into in a hurry. A situation of the kind I have described demands serious consideration, but when once you have made up your mind to fight, you must put every ounce at your command into the struggle, for, in the event of your failure, all and sundry would take liberties with you. On the other hand, after a display of force and (I may say) courage such as we provided, competitors, both big and little, think twice before seeking to get into opposition with you.

We proceeded on our way to Warminster, and it was apparent that my crushing defeat of our rivals had been very much to the liking of my entire staff and of my artistes, who all seemed pleased with themselves. My circus manager, the late "Sir" Robert Fossett, was beside himself with joy, as one of the partners in the rival show we had ousted had punished him rather severely when he had crossed their path with his own circus, with which at the time he was touring. He was, therefore, delighted to get some of his own back, although by proxy. But, with the opposition eliminated, the excitement of the chase died down, and in the reaction all felt flabby and several of the staff very thirsty as well.

During the afternoon performance that day there was a very amusing and, at the same time, very

exciting incident. We had among our artistes a trapeze and rope performer, who finished his performance on a rope stretched across the circus from pole to pole, which was placed as high as possible. It was his custom, when he had the rope in full swing, to let go his grip with his hands and dive into space, to be caught, when his hand was about 8 or 10 feet from the ground, by both ankles in the slips. Then he pulled himself up on to the rope, released the slips from his ankles, and descended to the arena.

Prior to his performance on this occasion, in celebration of the rout of my rivals, he had been imbibing too freely, and the result was that when he was caught and held by the ankles by the slips he was unable to pull himself up to effect his release. He struggled all in vain, and the more he struggled the greater was the merriment of the ring door attendants, grooms, etc., and presently the audience joined in the hilarity.

I did not see the beginning of the fun, but when I did come on the scene I realised that the man could not struggle head downwards for very long, and I believe I came just in the nick of time. When I had quickly informed the attendants, etc., of the seriousness of the man's situation, a rush was made to assist him, but we found it impossible to reach him. One of the artistes jumped on to the shoulders of a sturdy groom, but he could only just take the weight off the acrobat's shoulders. In the meantime several of the staff had been dispatched for ladders, but none was to be found in the circus, and so off rushed an employee to the menagerie, where, in contrast to the circus,

things were usually to be found in their proper places. A ladder, therefore, was readily procured in the menagerie, but this, when brought to the circus, proved insufficient for our purpose, and a second ladder was sent for. The two ladders were then placed, with their tops touching, V-shape, and one man ascended each while others below held and steadied them. Even then it was with great difficulty they supported the performer, cut the slings from his ankles, and brought him down to safety.

Had his rescue been much longer delayed, the acrobat, I fear, would have succumbed. As it was, he was very ill when released, but happily a few hours later he was completely out of danger. A week elapsed, however, before he was able to resume his performance. It was very foolish of the grooms, attendants, etc., not to have gone to his assistance at once, and they realised this when I came on the scene.

After this exciting episode, we settled down to normal. We had a very good season travelling through Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and then along the south coast towards London.

## CHAPTER XV

*I Provide a Circus and Menagerie for World's Fair, London, and Lose on Contract—Advised to Take things Easy—I Retire to Norwich—I Lease the Glasgow Olympia and Emerge from Retirement—Arrival in Glasgow—Heartbreaking Inspection of Olympia—I Set up the Scottish Zoo—A Pronounced Success—The Call of the Road—I Restart No. 1 Menagerie as a Result of Unrest amongst Staff—Poor Business in Vicinity of Glasgow—Trouble with an Elephant at the Zoo.*

WHEN I was in the vicinity of London with my Big Show (Bostock, Wombwell and Bailey's Circus, Hippodrome and Menagerie) in 1895, I received several visits from Messrs. H. and T. Read and Francis Bailey, the lessees of the World's Fair and Carnival at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London. They had heard of my great combined show, and were much impressed when they had seen it for themselves. They confided to me that they would very much like to have a similar attraction at their World's Fair, and asked me for my opinion of the proposal. "Well, you can manage that all right," I encouraged them. "No," was their reply, "we can't; we have thought it all out, and we can't do it." I, of course, became interested, and there and then worked out a scheme by which a circus-menagerie could be shown at the World's Fair to advantage. My visitors, enamoured of my plan, at once asked me to supply a circus as well as the menagerie for our usual seven weeks' engagement at the World's Fair.



I agreed to do so, and forthwith prepared an estimate of the cost.

As my readers will have observed, I had made my *début* in the circus business only two and a half years previously, and my management and experience of it had been limited to the summer seasons. Without consulting the equestrians and other artistes, I prepared and submitted an estimate, which, it transpired, was very much below actual cost. I deliberately cut the price as an inducement to the lessees of the World's Fair to book the combined show, as the introduction of a circus to the Royal Agricultural Hall had by this time become somewhat of an obsession with me.

My estimate was accepted, and it was when I set about booking up my performers for the seven weeks' engagement that I found I was going to lose much more money on the deal than I had anticipated. However, having signed the contract, I decided to carry it through good-naturedly and made up my mind that I was going to provide a top-notch circus no matter how much money it cost me. Indeed, I felt immensely proud at being given the opportunity to supply a circus for what was then the biggest hall in London. The venture, apart from the money I dropped in its promotion, was a huge success, and, as it turned out, I was really casting my bread upon the waters, for I got the contract to supply a circus for the World's Fair the following winter, of which more anon.

During November and December of 1895 we again encountered some extremely severe gales in the North of England, and the stress of these and the heavy demands made upon me by my ordinary duties told





MRS. E. H. BOSTOCK AT THE AGE OF FORTY.

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on my health. Again and again I was advised by doctors and friends to get some of the load off my shoulders. Indeed, some of my medical advisers went the length of saying that if I did not lessen the strain on my nerves I should soon have to give up business altogether. How easy it is to give advice, but how difficult of acceptance it is in many cases for the recipient. However, I really did feel about worn out, and, being keen to live the allotted span, I made up my mind that at the earliest opportunity I would seek a method of escape from some of my responsibilities.

During the winter of 1895-96 I again visited Edinburgh and toured through Lanarkshire with my No. 1 Menagerie. No. 2 Menagerie, reinforced by my circus, was on this occasion at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, while No. 3 Menagerie was taking Lancashire. I left my No. 1 Menagerie at Bellshill, Scotland, on January 30th, 1896, in charge of my brother-in-law, Mr. H. F. Birkett, and proceeded to Norwich, where I took up residence with my mother and only sister. After spending a few weeks with them I purchased a very nice house just outside the city, of which, after it had been thoroughly renovated, I took possession. I gave it the name of Elgin House, this being in honour of the northern Scottish city, which had been one of my favourite places of call. I built a stable and coachhouse, and made up my mind to retire from active business life and live in peace and quiet in the beautiful cathedral city, reserving the right or pleasure of an occasional visit to my three menageries as required or as I thought fit.

Another decision I took at this time was to cut my

connection with the circus business, or, at all events, not to run a circus with a menagerie again. I had found that I did much better financially without a circus which, in addition to the expense in which it involved me, entailed a great deal of hard work, which would have been passed on to any manager I might put in charge of a combined show.

In an earlier chapter I mentioned that I was enamoured of the idea of running a Zoo with other attractions in the Olympia, New City Road, Glasgow, and had made up my mind to purchase this building if and when it came into the market. Since February, 1894, I had been making overtures with this end in view, but success had not crowned my efforts. Judge of my surprise therefore, when, after I had been comfortably retired at Norwich for a matter of only six months, the Olympia was offered to me. By this time the place had sunk very low; in fact, in the Glasgow Press it had been described as the blackest spot in the city. However, be that as it may, I knew very well when I was approached with the view of renting the place, I was really desired as a tenant, but I made up my mind that, after being pleasantly anchored in Norwich, I should only accept the offer of tenancy at a very reasonable rent. I consulted my wife in regard to the project, and her verdict was, "Just please yourself; you have wanted it for a long time, and, although we are settled here, you are still a young man (I was only thirty-eight), and if you take it you will at least be out of the wind-storms which got on your nerves so much. If you think it is to be a success, take it."

The upshot was that, after some negotiations, I became tenant of the Olympia, the rent which was fixed being a very reasonable one. I took the building for five years with a break in my favour at the end of the first year, possession for me being arranged for April 1st, 1897. This, of course, entailed the breaking up of our nice home in Norwich, which my wife and I had just got done up and furnished to our satisfaction. But it had to be done, although sentiment was very much against the move. On March 31st we packed up and I travelled all night to reach Glasgow on the morning I was due to enter into possession of the Olympia. I left Mrs. Bostock with the two youngest children (my sons were then at the King Edward VI. School at Norwich) to come on the next day. Prior to this I had arranged for a joiner who had formerly travelled with the menagerie for about ten years to be on hand and take over the keys of the Olympia in my name and act as caretaker. I had also asked him to request his wife to fix up respectable apartments for us, these to be as near as possible to the Olympia, so that I could send Mrs. Bostock and two of my children direct to their temporary home on arrival. If Mrs. Bostock had been alone I should have sent her to an hotel, but hotels, according to my experience, are out of the question with young children.

Early on the morning of my arrival in Glasgow I went to see the Olympia and have a talk with the caretaker. When I entered the building my heart sank ; in fact, I think it nearly stopped beating. What a place ! what a dirty, filthy hole ! Begrimed outside and inside and from roof to floor, the building had the

unprepossessing appearance of a disused foundry, the aspect of untidiness being emphasised by a litter of broken bottles and other rubbish which was strewn on the cinder floor and was an undesirable legacy of an Aunt Sally business.

My first impulse on beholding this mess was to relinquish my project of a Zoo in Glasgow, give up my quarters, for which I had paid rent in advance, and hie straight back to Norwich. What I had seen had tended to confirm the doleful prognostications of my brother professionals in regard to the Olympia. These wiseacres, among whom was the late "Lord" George Sanger, had said that they felt sorry for me. I had, they agreed, been a very hard-working young man, and here I was embarking on a wild scheme in which I was bound to lose every shilling I possessed. To think of running a circus in Glasgow, where Hengler was already securely established—in fact, his stronghold, one of my friends had further declared—was sheer madness.

These prophecies were very much in my mind as I made my heart-breaking inspection of the Olympia, and I believe my decision to proceed with my plan was taken as much for the purpose of proving them false and unfounded as for anything else. I tackled the seemingly hopeless undertaking with a will to win, and lost no time in getting on with the job. Having decided I was not going to abandon my project, I got in touch with a contractor whom I instructed to clear and cart away all the rubbish that disfigured the floor. Close on 200 cart-loads, if my memory serves me faithfully, were required to effect the clearance.



After having had a look round the district in which the Olympia was situated, and having attended to a few odds and ends, I went to see the caretaker's wife, who gave me the address of the landlady who was providing board and lodging for my wife, myself and our two youngest children. I asked the caretaker's wife to see the landlady and ask her to have tea ready about 7 p.m., as my wife and children would arrive in the city at 6.45 p.m. Of the tea provided little criticism could be offered, while the rooms we were to occupy were clean and roomy. I thought we were going to be quite comfortable in these apartments until we had found a house of our own, but a disagreeable feature in the form of the landlady's overweening attachment to John Barleycorn was to spoil the prospect.

Shortly after tea we were disturbed by sounds of bitter quarrelling which was taking place in the kitchen. The strife died down, only to be resumed at intervals, and when I left the house in the course of the evening to post a letter, hostilities had reached the self-throwing stage. On my return, after but a few minutes' absence, I found my wife in a state of great distress and longing to get away from Bedlam. Investigation showed that our landlady, who had been imbibing too freely, was having a serious altercation with her husband. This unpleasant development, coming on the top of my disheartening discovery on inspecting the Olympia, caused us greatly to regret our having left Norwich.

That night we got very little sleep, and when the landlady inquired at 8 a.m. what we would like for

breakfast I brusquely informed her that we did not require any, as we were leaving at once. I had previously ordered a cab for 8.30 a.m., and when I had paid the landlady what I was owing her I removed my wife and children to the Waverley Hotel, where we all partook of a splendid breakfast in peace and quietness. The meal over, I went to the Olympia and got to work with the caretaker. There was one water-hydrant in the building, near the centre, and with this we soon got busy. We played water on the inside of the roof for hours. In addition to cleansing the glass, the water, falling on the floor, laid the dust.

The sides of the building we tackled next, and with the removal of the rubbish from the floor the Olympia began to have a less repulsive smell and appearance. From that moment I never regretted having rented the building.

Next I got in Matthew Henderson & Sons, joiners and contractors, who quickly erected the woodwork for the animals' cages, after which I had the ironwork made by Messrs. P. & R. Fleming, Ironworkers, from a pattern I had brought with me from Norwich. I had contracted with a Nottingham man, Mr. L. Woodhouse, for the erection of the circus in the centre of the building. The plans for this work had to be passed by the Glasgow Dean of Guild Court, but this formality had not to be observed in connection with the other work.

My aim was to open on May 12th, 1897, and towards this end we worked feverishly. The building began to look thoroughly respectable, but all the while the earthen floor was causing me displeasure, as I felt it would cause a lot of dust. With the view of elimi-

nating this nuisance I procured and accepted an estimate for covering the entire floor-space with 2-inch planks. You must understand that I had to prepare for heavy waggons being pulled, and for elephants, etc., walking over the floor, and, believe me, it took some wood to cover that floor.

I had made arrangements for my No. 1 Menagerie to work up to Glasgow. My intention was to transfer all its stock to the new cages in the Olympia, which was now to be known as the Scottish Zoo. I had also bought a large supply of animals from London, Liverpool, Hamburg and Antwerp to augment the lot from my No. 1 Menagerie.

No. 1 Menagerie arrived in Glasgow on the morning of May 9th, and the Scottish Zoo and Variety Circus was formally opened on May 12th, 1897. From the first it was a pronounced success. I seemed to have struck the very thing the public wanted, and I felt pleased and heartened at the reception and reward of my strenuous labours. Visitors complimented me on my enterprise, and the Glasgow Press was extremely eulogistic of the cleanliness of the place, and also emphasised the educational value of such an institution to the West of Scotland.

Week by week and month by month the business went on as smoothly as clockwork. Not a hitch occurred to disturb it. The waggons and all the paraphernalia belonging to No. 1 Menagerie were stored in a yard in Port Dundas Road, Glasgow. It seemed unlikely that these would ever be required again. I disposed of twenty-nine of my horses by auction; twelve of the best were sent to Edinburgh

to work for the Corporation, in whose service they had been hired for several winters previously, and seven more of the beast hired to a contractor in Glasgow, with disastrous results, of which I shall write later.

No. 2 Menagerie, after its winter season (1895-96) at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, was sold by auction at Dalston, London, at the end of February, 1896, and I then placed my brother-in-law, Mr. Frank Bostock, in charge of the circus which I had run in conjunction with my No. 1 Menagerie for three summer seasons. My brother-in-law toured through the North of England and Scotland with the circus, but the venture was not a great success, so I dropped it after only one season and disposed of all the circus effects at Peterborough on September 12th, 1898.

During this season my No. 3 Menagerie travelled through the West and South of England, and fulfilled my World's Fair contract at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, 1896-97, when Mr. Frank Bostock took over the managerial reins from Mr. Sydney Braham, who some time later started a menagerie of his own.

The year 1897 proved a splendid period for me. I had spent nearly £10,000 in launching the Scottish Zoo, but the business I did there was very good indeed. On the top of this I was offered and accepted an advantageous contract for a sixteen weeks' engagement for a menagerie in the grounds of the Crystal Palace, London. This being Diamond Jubilee Year, the directors were anxious to secure all the oldest amusements available, and Bostock & Wombwell's Menagerie was among the attractions selected. No. 1 Menagerie having been incorporated in the Scottish Zoo, and

No. 2 Menagerie having been sold, No. 3, which was now known as No. 2, had to fill the bill, and I augmented it for the purpose. After the engagement at the Crystal Palace, the new No. 2 Menagerie, as I had no other menagerie on the road, had the run of all the big Fairs, including the Nottingham Goose Fair and the Hull Fair. Then it went on to the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, for my long-standing engagement there for the winter of 1897-98. Thereafter it proceeded to the Continent and toured through France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, and parts of Italy and Germany until November, 1906, when it was disposed of by auction at Paris.

This menagerie spent most of its time on the Continent in France, Belgium, and Holland. As I have indicated, it penetrated to Germany, but the severity of the restrictions enforced on it by the police there caused my brother-in-law, Mr. Frank Bostock, to shorten his stay in the Fatherland. The restrictions imposed on him were deliberate persecution to drive him out. He retreated quickly from Italy because the roads there were too difficult and narrow for our big, heavy vehicles.

To return to the Scottish Zoo during our first summer, it was apparent to me that, although we were in the heyday of success, there was unrest amongst the members of my menagerie staff, the most uneasy of the lot, in my opinion, being their manager, my brother-in-law, Mr. H. F. Birkett. The call of the road for them was irresistible and the shining of the sun through the glass roof of the Zoo caused them to chafe against their confinement. I observed the



symptoms before they unburdened themselves to me, and when they did express their feelings they left me in no doubt as to what they wanted. I realised that to get peace I had either to dismiss the growlers or restart my No. 1 Menagerie on the road again and send them with it.

By this time I felt that Glasgow could and would support the Scottish Zoo and Variety Circus the entire year round, and when I came to consider the situation I saw no reason why the old menagerie should not return to the road. So one day I did decide to get the waggons, front entrance, etc., repaired and repainted with the view to the resuscitation of No. 1 Menagerie in the following spring. I detailed a number of the malcontents to see to the renovation of the effects for the menagerie, and they revelled in the work. The prospect of returning to the road in the spring was a splendid spur to endeavour. They were as happy as the proverbial sand-boy.

After we had enjoyed a wonderful Christmas and New Year season at the Zoo and Circus, we began preparations proper for No. 1 Menagerie going on tour. It opened at Coatbridge on March 14th, 1898, but business anywhere near Glasgow we found was poor, this being due to the proximity of the Scottish Zoo, which had drawn numerous patrons from Lanarkshire, and, indeed, from all over Scotland. Strange as it may appear, the Zoo was the Mecca of thousands from the North. It was, therefore, borne in upon me that I could not, so to speak, both eat my cake and have it, and I began to regret having resumed No. 1 Menagerie.



From Carlisle southwards, where the appeal of the Scottish Zoo was unfelt, business was as good as it had been prior to the withdrawal of the menagerie from the road, but I had still a lot of money to draw in before I recouped the outlay in which the resuscitation of the menagerie had involved me. In the purchase of animals and horses I had spent a sum of nearly £6,000, the horses I bought to reinforce those I already had costing £1,800 alone. The animals I changed about so that some of those which had been with the menagerie before went on the road again, while some I purchased at Hamburg and elsewhere on the Continent took their places at the Zoo.

Among the latter was a female Indian elephant. A miserable-looking beast, I had bought her because she was the only one available at the moment. I picked her up at the Zoological Gardens at Aix-la-Chapelle, where I felt she had not had the best of treatment. She appeared both cold and hungry, and I believed that once she came into my possession I could, with good treatment, soon improve her appearance. She arrived in a huge teak case, and when we got her out I imagined she was even thinner than when I saw her at Aix-la-Chapelle. We got her moved to the Zoo two days after the menagerie had departed and got her safely into the elephant's usual place, where we tied her up.

After she had had two days' complete rest and plenty to eat we untied her with the object of walking her round the Zoo and getting her used to the building (in which she was to carry children, etc.), when she suddenly bolted and dashed between the back end of

the circus and the back wall of the building. Between the two she became so tightly wedged that she could not squeeze herself in another inch, and it was obvious to us that to get her to back out was going to be a matter of difficulty, and also that when we did succeed in doing so it might be a source of danger, as she might bolt again and cause damage in her wild career.

Most of my experienced staff had cleared out with the menagerie, and I was under a handicap in tackling the recalcitrant elephant. However, we got to work as best we could. I put a man in front of her and another behind her, and before we attempted to move her I made the former connect her fore feet with chains, so that when we did get her released from her prison she could move only very slowly. The chains fastened, we offered her some tempting morsels from behind. To reach the tit-bits—pieces of bread, carrot, etc.—she had to pass her trunk between her forelegs. This kindness gave the animal confidence in us, and we gradually brought the tit-bits further from her trunk. The result was that the elephant, eager to get the delicacies, made a mighty effort, which released her from the vice into which she had put herself. Then we led her back to her cage, and from that day we had no more trouble with her. Later she was transferred to the travelling menagerie, with which she remained until she died from blood poisoning, contracted by running a rusty nail into her foot, in September, 1921—twenty-three years after.

## CHAPTER XVI

*The Public Whim—Promenade Concerts at Scottish Zoo and Variety Circus—Big Opposition that did not Hurt us—Maskeing Day in Glasgow—Free Show at the Zoo—Ceaseless Stream of Visitors—Students' Effigy of Kruger Upsets Animals—Getting Rid of the Crowd—I Struggle through the National Anthem Unaided—Roger, Giant Indian Male Elephant, contracts Must, attacks Keepers and is Shot.*

TOWARDS the end of my first year at the Scottish Zoo and Variety Circus business had dropped very considerably, the shrinkage in the number of patrons being particularly felt at the circus. In consequence I began to wonder if I had erred in exercising my option to remain tenant of the building for the five years of my lease. But, having committed myself to another four years' tenancy, it was up to me to make plans to meet the situation created by the public whim. I decided to close the circus for a few months, and presently in its stead was running a seventeen weeks series of promenade concerts, which, I understand, were the first promenade concerts held in Glasgow. Among the well-known instrumental combinations I engaged were the Blue Hungarian Band, the Ladies' Viennese Orchestra and Zette Handel's Ladies' Orchestra, while among the popular Scottish artistes whose services I booked were W. F. Frame, "The Man U Know"; Mr. and Mrs. Graham Moffat, of "Bunty Pulls the Strings" fame; Mr. and Mrs. Dickson Moffat, well-known Elocu-

tionists and Sketch Artists ; Miss Jessie Maclachlan, "The Scottish Queen of Song" ; Mr. J. M. Hamilton, "The Scottish Sims Reeves" ; Prince Bendon, the ventriloquist, etc., etc.

April was a splendid month at the Zoo, which, besides being a popular resort for Glaswegians, was an irresistible magnet for folks from the country. Things were a bit dull during May and June, but in July we were again carried along on the tide of prosperity. The week before the Glasgow Fair (July) holidays I reopened the circus, and did so well that it was apparent to me that I could bank on the business as a permanency, although, like people in other lines of business, I was bound to experience a lean time now and again.

Soon after the actual opening of the Scottish Zoo and Variety Circus, in July, 1897, I learned that the largest travelling circus in this country was coming to Glasgow, and I knew that it would be very extensively advertised. This news was not to my liking, and I made it my business at once to get in touch with the owners of this establishment with the view of influencing them to abandon the proposed visit, as I feared that the presence of this big show in the city would injure my whole season. I offered the owners a substantial monetary concession to cut Glasgow out of their itinerary, but they absolutely refused to cancel the visit, and eventually, after having been heavily advertised, they arrived in the city to exhibit for ten days. But, as showing that my fears were entirely ungrounded, the presence of this travelling rival did not affect business at the Zoo in the least, whereas the

opposition did so poorly that they moved out of Glasgow after exhibiting for only six, instead of ten, days—an almost unheard-of experience for a big, first-class concern like this.

In the following year (1898) we had Barnum and Bailey's Circus, Hippodrome and Menagerie in opposition to my place, but even this gigantic attraction did not hurt us any. As a matter of fact, the day they opened and had their splendid procession through all the principal streets from their stance in Victoria Road and back we did splendid business at the Zoo. Many country people and strangers who had come to Glasgow to see this big procession came to the Zoo after they had seen all that was to be seen of the American show in the streets.

Barnum and Bailey's big show returned to Glasgow the following year (1899), and exhibited for a week, commencing on the autumn holiday. We had a splendid company at that time and did enormous business, while the Yankee invaders did not open the first day from some cause or other and the rest of the week they were sparsely attended.

All through the five years of my lease, the Zoo was a powerful draw for both city and country folks, and I had no reason to regret the venture. During this period No. 1 Menagerie was travelling through England and Wales, while No. 2 Menagerie was touring the Continent.

I shall never forget Mafeking Day (May 20th, 1900) at the Scottish Zoo and Variety Circus. During the Friday afternoon and evening it was rumoured in the city that Mafeking had been relieved, but official



confirmation of the glad tidings was not forthcoming until 11.30 p.m. My late friend, W. F. Frame, "The Man U Know," was having supper with me when the news reached my house. We were all greatly elated by it. "Governor," excitedly exclaimed the Scotch comedian, "what are you going to do? We must do something to celebrate the event, and *at once*."

"What can we do?" I asked; "whatever it is, we should have a little time for publicity, and that seems impossible, and now the only thing I can think of is to throw open the Zoo free from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m."

"That is the very thing," enthusiastically rejoined Frame. "Let's get down to the newspapers and inform them. They will make it known." So off we went to the offices of the *Glasgow Herald* and the *North British Daily Mail* who, the following day (Saturday) included in their rejoicings announcements a notice of the free opening of the Zoo.

We were, of course, late in getting to bed and, as a result, not very early out of it. I got to the Zoo at 8.45 a.m. and was dumbfounded to find a queue awaiting admission. Thought I to myself: the pen is indeed mightier than the sword; great is the power of the Press. My staff was not called until 8.30 a.m., but on this occasion some of them, as a result of celebrations which had lasted into the "wee, sma' hours," were not given to punctuality. However, with the hands available I got cleared up and ready for our free guests by 9.30 a.m., by which time there were two queues, one stretching eastwards and the



other westwards, each about a quarter of a mile long. It seemed almost incredible that at such short notice such a crowd at such an early hour of the morning should be attracted to the Scottish Zoo considering this had been open for over three years. But the multitude was there clamouring for admission, and I had to face the fact and expedite arrangements for the opening of the doors.

We opened the two doors to the front and allowed the people to wander in as they liked, but within a short time it was apparent that the safety of the throng demanded also the opening of the two big doors at the back. Although I knew these entrances would admit other visitors from that direction, I felt that the opening of the back doors would admit of easier movement by the crowds and would be very useful in case of an emergency.

We had a ceaseless stream of visitors for two and a half hours and everything went well, except that in the stress I had difficulty in keeping an eye on my staff, who had become infected with the Mafeking fever and were consequently not quite alive to the dangers of the situation. Among the invaders were a large number of students who entered triumphantly, bearing aloft an effigy of Kruger. They had difficulty in negotiating the narrow entrance at the pay-box with the effigy, and it would have been better if they had failed to get it inside. The effigy drove the animals almost crazy. They roared wildly and dashed distractedly about their cages, and, sensing imminent danger, I struggled through the crowd to the students and asked them to put the effigy down. As a matter

of fact, the students did not require much persuasion on my part, for the majority of them had become panicky in view of developments in the animals' cages, but they were in a predicament, inasmuch as they did not know what to do with the effigy. I, of course, instructed them to lower it on the floor so that the animals could not see it, and they complied, after which it was pushed along and got outside by one of the back doors.

With the removal of the effigy the animals calmed down, and all was well. By 12.30 the crowd had begun to thin, and by one o'clock the number of visitors had dwindled to about 800 or 1,000. I then marshalled the few of my staff who had not lost their equilibrium, and managed to get the back doors closed. I also posted a couple of men at the front doors to prevent the entrance of further visitors, and then we set ourselves to get rid of the people within the Zoo, as we had to get everything cleared up and ready for our usual Saturday *matinée* in the circus, which was right in the centre of the Zoo.

I rang a bell to draw the people together and towards me where I had taken up an elevated position. I announced that the free show was at an end, and I must ask them to retire so that we could get ready for our circus *matinée*, etc., etc., but before they departed I hoped they would join with me in singing the National Anthem. Thereupon, without the assistance of band or piano, I led off, "God Save the Queen," but not a musical sound came from one of them. There I stood alone and struggled through the National Anthem without a helping note from one individual





ROGER, THE MALE INDIAN ELEPHANT WHO DEVELOPED MUST, WAS SHOT IN THE SCOTTISH ZOO, NOVEMBER, 1900.

in the crowd. It was one of the most trying ordeals I ever experienced. I carried through to the end, and then set to work getting the free visitors out of the building. By 2.30 we were ready for our afternoon performance, but from the point of view of business it was one of the worst Saturdays we experienced at New City Road. The weather was fine and everyone seemed bent on mafficking in the open air, with the result that places of amusement suffered very much. Albeit, I must put it down as a Grand Day!

Among the many attractions at the Scottish Zoo was Roger, a giant Indian male elephant, who had been travelling with the menagerie for twelve years prior to coming to the Zoo in May, 1897. He had always been a quiet, well-behaved animal, and with the menagerie used to pull a small waggon on the journeys from town to town. At the Scottish Zoo, about October, 1900, Roger, in common with all male elephants when they reach their majority (twenty-five years), developed "must." While suffering from this ailment some male elephants are very dangerous to handle, and thus it was with Roger, whose whole facial appearance altered completely as a result of the malady. In place of his former kindly expression, he developed a wicked-looking eye, and his offensiveness became a serious matter in the Zoo, where we had so many visitors. But it was the members of the staff whose duty it was to attend to him who experienced the brunt of Roger's changed disposition. He made several attempts to strike his keeper, a coloured man named John Allen.

Along with a smaller companion and several camels

and dromedaries, Roger went out for exercise twice weekly. The animals were generally led direct towards the country, and were away from the Zoo for about a couple of hours. Strange to relate, both on the streets of the city and on the country roads Roger's behaviour was irreproachable, but no sooner had he returned to his place in the Zoo than the nastiness of his disposition was reasserted. On his return from his second outing, following the development of the must, he made a savage attack on his keeper, who would assuredly have been killed had not several members of the staff rushed to his assistance and beaten off the elephant. As it was, the keeper had one of his arms and several ribs broken and was removed to the Glasgow Western Infirmary for treatment.

Another keeper had accordingly to be found for the fractious elephant. It was usual to tie up Roger by one hind leg and one foreleg, but in consequence of his unruliness and his abnormal strength under the influence of must, I was not quite sure that the chains and the rings would hold at the points where they were fastened. I therefore decided to have a den made which, I was certain, would be strong enough to withstand Roger's wildest effort. It being impossible to have the work executed while Roger was in his usual place, I got a good builder to work while Roger and the other elephants were out at exercise, which was lengthened considerably to facilitate my plan. During Roger's absence the builder took measurements and other particulars of the required den, for the fixing of which, during the elephant's next exercis-



ing outing, workmen cut holes right through the 16-inch wall of the building. The cage, which was built according to an illustration supplied by myself, proved very strong and suitable, and it was fixed up and made ready for the elephant's occupancy in less than two and a half hours.

During these few days we had had to make several changes in the keepership of Roger, who had shown his dislike of each man I had deputed to take charge of him. When he realised that a certain man had been given the job of looking after him, Roger, on his arrival back in the Zoo after exercise, gave way to an ungovernable fit of temper. I had, of course, been much concerned in everything concerning Roger, and this interest had earned for me the elephant's strong antipathy. Whenever I went within yards of him he made the most menacing lunges to get hold of me.

We had now got down to the very last member of the staff, George Gruby, a coloured man, who could go near the elephant, but his period of immunity from attack was also of short duration. Gruby had taken Roger out for exercise while the joiners were erecting his new and stronger den on the spot where the animal had stood for over three years. As soon as he had been got into his new den and the door fastened, Roger made a very determined, but happily unsuccessful, attempt to crush Gruby. This really left us at our wits' end and at a loss to know what was best to do in the circumstances. Since he would allow no one near him, Roger's food was thrown to him, while his drinking water had to be set down when he chanced not to be looking. If one of the staff had given him

his water straightforwardly, as we used to do before his trouble came upon him, he would have tossed both bucket and water at him. It was our custom, therefore, to watch for our opportunity, which was when Roger's attention was riveted elsewhere, to rescue the buckets if he had not taken them in and smashed them.

Within a few days a great quantity of dung had collected in the elephant's den, but none of us dare go in to remove this, and if we attempted to reach it with a scraper, he tore it from us and broke it in pieces. The stench from the must and from the accumulated dung had now become very offensive, in addition to which his menacing attitude to visitors had also given me cause for concern. I therefore decided to destroy the elephant as humanely and expeditiously as possible. Some suggested poisoning, others strangling, and others shooting, and it was the last-mentioned method I favoured. I arranged with a Mr. Horton, a gunsmith in Glasgow, to come to the Zoo with an elephant gun and to bring with him two or three soldiers equipped with ordinary military rifles on December 6th, 1900. I sought safety in numbers, as I fancied, if Roger were wounded only, he would break down his cage and do great damage.

Roger was passionately fond of wet bran, and I exploited his weakness to facilitate his end. I arranged that on the first occasion the elephant put his head out for the bran the firing party were to study the position; on the second occasion they were to take aim, and on the third to fire. The volley, sure enough, was most even, and the big, mighty elephant

sank on his legs and died without a move. It was just a settling of his body, and that was the end of Roger.

I kept him that day and the next (Saturday) on exhibition, and thousands flocked to see the dead elephant. On the Sunday I engaged a number of butchers to skin the animal, and the hide and skeleton I presented to the Art Gallery in Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow, where it is to be seen to-day, the work of stuffing being excellently carried out by Charles Kirk & Co., taxidermists, then in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, who, after setting the huge beast up, had to take out the whole front of their shop in order to get him out.

I was very loath to destroy the poor brute after he had given me fifteen years of faithful service, but the safety of the public and of my staff rendered this course imperative. By the side of Roger in the Art Gallery Museum there is a very small elephant, which I lost in the Zoo and subsequently presented to the Museum, where a great number of my late animals can be seen.

## CHAPTER XVII

*Further Lease of Scottish Zoo Building—I Take in a Partner, Re-organise, and Reopen as Scottish Zoo and Hippodrome—First to Adopt “Twice Nightly” System in Scotland—A Quiet Start in July and Splendid Business in the Autumn—I Lose £10,000 in London Venture—I Loan my Partner £5,000 to Start The Albambra, Paris—I Take Over Old Theatre Royal, Norwich, with Brother-in-law as Partner, and Reopen as Hippodrome—Hippodrome Transferred to Grand Opera House, Norwich—I Send a Menagerie to South Africa—My Manager Urges me to Send a Circus and I Acquiesce—Venture a Failure—Menagerie and Circus on Tour in Australia and New Zealand—Manager Leaves me in the Lurch.*

**B**Y 1902, when they had been open to the public for five years, both the Zoo and Circus had become a bit shabby, the circus, which was of a very temporary nature, being particularly in need of attention. As I had secured a further lease, extending to ten years, of the building, with an option of purchasing at a given figure, I decided to try to provide a better building, and, if possible, more up-to-date entertainment for the public. Just about this time several music-halls in England were running on the “twice nightly” system at cheap prices, and, according to reports which were current in the profession, were doing immense business. I accordingly set out to adopt this system and be the first on the scene with it in Scotland.

This departure entailed a pretty big outlay and a complete reorganisation of the Zoo. For these I was fully prepared. Upon inquiry I ascertained that the

most successful man with the two-house-nightly business in England was Mr. Thomas Barrasford, who, I heard, was going to open in Glasgow, he having actually got an option on a block of old property in Renfield Street, which was on the site of the present Glasgow Pavilion. Thus it appeared as if two of us were to start the same thing in Glasgow; and when my younger brother, F. C. Bostock, who happened to be over from America on a visit, heard of the two projects, he advised me strongly to approach Mr. Barrasford and suggest a partnership in my place between him and myself, as an alternative to the two of us opening in opposition to each other on the "twice nightly" stunt.

Although I did not like the idea of the partnership and was quite prepared to meet all the cost of the alterations, etc., myself, I thought a lot of my brother's advice, and accepted same, as a result of consideration of the question of "turns." A great many of the really excellent "turns" I had been running with success in the circus had come to Glasgow from my prospective rival's English houses, and *vice versa*, and I imagined it might be very difficult to secure a good company every week if I had to contend with further opposition in the city, because, of course, the Empire and also the Britannia already existed. Accordingly I approached Mr. Barrasford, and when he saw the Zoo building he seemed delighted with the position and possibilities of the building. He urged that the scheme should be carried through as soon as possible, and so I fixed up a deed of co-partnership with him.

We closed the Zoo and Variety Circus on April 5th,



1902, reopened the Zoo by itself on May 17th, and the Scottish Zoo and Glasgow Hippodrome on July 21st, 1902. Only fourteen weeks, therefore, elapsed between the closing of the Circus and the opening of the Hippodrome, which seated 2,500 people, and had been built to my own idea from plans and designs supplied by Mr. Bertie Crewe, the well-known London architect. From a fully-equipped and gigantic stage there was a sloping floor for 90 feet, and then a step erection to the back, or cheap seats, so that virtually the entire audience were on one floor without either circles or gallery, the building being 90 feet wide.

The Hippodrome was the first building of its kind built in this country, but I myself approximated the design at both Paisley and Hamilton later. There are now many similar buildings all over this country, and, I have learned, also many in America, and at the time of writing two more are being erected in Glasgow. The interior of the Hippodrome was very well done, being beautifully decorated by De Jong, of London, and comfortably seated by Deans, of Birmingham. We also went to the expense of magnificent carpets, which at that period were an innovation, and the talk of the city; and, what was most important of all, provided a splendid programme. The selection and booking of artistes were entirely in the hands of my partner, who, as a result of his connection with other theatres and hippodromes in England, was in an advantageous position to undertake these details.

We were, I may say, not swept off our feet by the initial success of the venture. I have told you that





FRANCES BOSTOCK AND HER TEDDY BEARS, 1911

[To face p. 168.]



we opened in July. As a matter of fact, it was during Glasgow Fair Week that we made our *début*. With the circus I had always done very well at this period of the year, due principally to the visits of country people and strangers to the city, it being the Glasgow Fair time. But with the Hippodrome we were ahead of the times; to be candid, the type of patrons I had hitherto enjoyed during the Fair preferred the circus to stage performances, while the new arrangement of the Zoo, which had been reduced in size, was far from popular. With the critics' view in the latter matter I entirely agreed.

During August, however, we did pretty good business, and towards the end of this month and all through September, by which time the Glasgow people had returned from the coast and other summer resorts, we enjoyed something in the nature of a boom. For nearly two years we did extraordinary business. The splendid programme, the elaborate furnishings, and the low prices of admission—1s., 6d. and 3d.—were a revelation to Glasgow and the West of Scotland, and my partner and I were naturally very delighted with our success. The Hippodrome building, I may say, we regarded as temporary, it being our intention, at a later date, to erect a very handsome building on the site and transfer the Zoo to some gardens as near to the centre of the city as possible, and I very much regret that neither of these projects materialised.

While the Hippodrome was being got ready for opening, I was approached to become a director of the Glasgow Pavilion which was to be erected soon. I replied to the effect that I was not keen on limited

liability companies, and, furthermore, I could not accept a directorship without first consulting my partner, who, it so happened, was managing director of the Pavilion Company. Mr. Barrasford, when I consulted him on the matter, said, "Don't have anything to do with that scheme ; it won't go on ; I will see that it doesn't." Accepting this advice, I refused a directorship of the Pavilion Company, but the scheme did go on some time later, although the erection of the Pavilion took a very long time. When it was eventually opened it did not realise the success which had been attained by the Glasgow Hippodrome, which was still the talk of the town, and, indeed, of Scotland.

While the Hippodrome was enjoying its run of success, my partner was prospecting for further speculations. Amongst other ventures, he secured the option of a long lease of the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, London, which, when brought up to date, would, he assured me, be the greatest amusement success on record and a veritable gold mine for its owners. He pressed me to enter this scheme on the conditions on which we had become partners in Glasgow, but I hesitated for some time because I did not like any venture in London. Eventually, however, I acquiesced without as much as seeing the Britannia, which was a great mistake. I relied on my partner's knowledge of the building, etc. ; but when I did pay a personal visit I was greatly disappointed, as I found the theatre in a very cheap, although very thickly populated, part of the north-east of London, and also discovered that the "fare" provided in it

had been stock drama by cheap dramatic companies, and that, although it had always been a successful pantomime house with the cheaper people, this had been due principally to the personality of the proprietress, the late Mrs. Sarah Lane.

I saw the plans for the alterations and reseating and redecorating of the theatre, and they were elaborate and expensive. I felt that to run it as a first-class house in the district in which it was situated was the height of folly, it being apparent to me that the change would drive away those who had been in the habit of supporting the house. However, I was told by Mr. Barrasford that this was the only way to run these modern places successfully, and, rightly or wrongly, I capitulated. The alterations were commenced, and half of the interior was pulled down. Eventually I managed to get out of this venture, but not before I lost over £10,000 in it—a subject to which I shall return later.

While the Glasgow Hippodrome continued its successful career my partner found still another place, the Alhambra Theatre, Paris, which, after alteration and redecoration and under his management, was “to lick creation.” Again he asked me to share in the speculation, but on this occasion I refused right away. I happened to know a great deal more about France than he did, and knew that the authorities could harass any foreign amusement caterer, if they were so disposed, to such an extent as to make it impossible for them to carry on. When he saw I was not to be swayed from my decision, my partner asked me if I would finance him to the extent of £5,000 to allow

him to open the place, and to please him I acquiesced ; and that was the start of the Alhambra, Paris, which has been a very successful undertaking since its inception, and did splendid business even during the Great War.

I omitted to mention that during February of this year (1903) I paid a visit to my mother and married sister at Norwich, and on one of the nights I stayed there I went with my brother-in-law, Mr. F. W. Fitt, to see a show in the Old Theatre Royal in that city. It was a very wintry night, and we had to plough our way through the snow to get in. Except for one or two public-houses which provided little "sing-songs," the Old Theatre Royal was the only regular place of amusement in Norwich. Now and again panoramas and other attractions were staged in the Assembly Rooms, while every winter, for twelve or fifteen weeks, a very successful circus had been run in the Agricultural Hall, Norwich, by the late Mr. George Gilbert, Henglers', Sangers' and others.

At this time, however, a beautiful building intended for amusements was being erected in the centre of the city, to be called the Grand Opera House. The project had been launched by a company, but just prior to my visit the scheme had reached a deadlock, and the builder, who had to complete the building on his own, had sold it to the lessee and manager of the Old Theatre Royal. This gentleman, like every other in the profession, had heard glowing accounts of the success of the Glasgow Hippodrome, and on meeting me on this occasion, he suggested I should take the Old Theatre Royal with the view of running it on



similar lines. I replied that I would consider the proposal if a strong inducement to do so was offered. "Well," replied the Old Theatre Royal lessee and manager, the late Mr. Fred Morgan, "I go into the new Opera House in June, and I have seven more years to run here. I shall sell you my lease here, with the approval of the owners, at a very reasonable figure. I have no doubt the owners will accept you as tenant."

To make a long story short, I eventually took over his lease on June 1st, 1903, took in my brother-in-law, Mr. F. W. Fitt, who resided in Norwich and was a member of the local town council, as a partner, and reopened the place under the name of the Norwich Hippodrome. My brother-in-law was a very keen business man, but it required considerable persuasion on my part to get him to take even a small share in my scheme. When he did come in he entered into the spirit of the venture, and, with the permission of the owners of the building, we set to work to remodel, renovate and decorate the Old Theatre Royal, over eighty years old, at a cost of over £1,400

With a great flourish of trumpets we opened on August 31st, 1903. The new building, which was known as the Grand Opera House, had opened on August Bank Holiday, almost a month previously, and had done very well. A change, however, apparently came over its fortunes when the Hippodrome threw open its doors to the public. The Hippodrome, late Old Theatre Royal, now bright and cheery and providing a new style of entertainment for the public, proved too strong an opposition for the Opera House.

The sequel was that within fourteen months I had purchased the new building and removed thither, while the Old Theatre Royal lessee had returned to his original house to run the remaining six years of the lease as our sub-tenants. The new building, which we renamed the Hippodrome, was an instant success, and still flourishes.

But to return to the Glasgow Zoo and Hippodrome. During the winter of 1902-3, Fillis's Savage South Africa had visited Glasgow and put up in the Exhibition Buildings in Duke Street, Dennistoun, where the Palladium Palais de Danse now stands. Amongst the stock of this show were some nice elephants and two splendid lions, the latter of which I eventually bought and added to the stock of the Scottish Zoo. The trainer of these lions was a tall, military-looking man, who had never been in my employment, but had been seven years with Lord George Sanger's Circus and for a period with my younger brother, F. C. Bostock. By this time he had been five years with Fillis's Circus, with which, after travelling several times through South Africa, he came to this country. He had a weak chest, and, while the South African climate suited him, he informed me that a few years in Britain would finish him. I saw a great deal of this trainer, and in the course of our conversations he pressed me to organise a Bostock and Wombwell menagerie to tour in South Africa; the name alone, he said, would draw the public. If I put him in charge, the change, he was sure, would be very beneficial to his health, and he would guarantee that my menagerie would be an enormous success in South Africa. I was doing very

well at this time, and perhaps making too much money, and, deciding that the suggestion was a good one and also feeling disposed to do the trainer a good turn, I agreed to the proposal. I set to work and ordered waggons to suit the South African railway gauge, as everything goes by rail over there. I also ordered a new front entrance and a new tent; in fact, all the effects for the venture were brand new. Then I went over to Bordeaux, France, and bought up a whole French menagerie and augmented its stock from other sources, taking care to specialise in a number of animals which, I learned, had never been seen in South Africa. I also engaged a goodly number of artistes who were to appear on a proper stage at one end of the menagerie.

When everything was ready I shipped the menagerie on the S.S. *Hostillious* (Houston Line) from London on October 29th, 1903. About five weeks later the menagerie opened at Capetown. I had provided an excellent show, the cost of which was nearly £9,000, but happily it was a great success from the first. A personal reason for countenancing the trainer's suggestion was my unfulfilled desire to travel in South Africa, which had a tremendous fascination for me, and I felt if I sent a menagerie over there I should surely manage to go to see it. But although the menagerie was in South Africa for nearly two years, and I have had another there since for a similar period (in 1914-15), my desire for a tour of South Africa remains unfulfilled.

The show had not been running very long when the manager, despite the fact that it had been doing very

well, wrote me to say that we had made a mistake in having a menagerie without a circus. He explained that the white people would not mix with the natives, and confessed that he was at a loss to know how to separate them except by seating. I cabled him instructions to separate the races in South Africa as we had separated the people in France and on the Continent. This method entailed divisions in the menagerie, to which different prices of admission were charged, and, of course, the higher-priced places in South Africa would be available only for the white population. This was perhaps not a very nice method, but it seemed to me to be the only one to meet the situation; but the manager, after five years' experience in South Africa, should have foreseen this difficulty and arranged accordingly.

My manager, having painted a dazzling picture of the overwhelming success he would achieve with a circus, urged me to have one ready for him by the time he completed his eleven months' tour of South Africa and returned to Capetown. Ignorant of the real reason behind his ambition to have a circus and menagerie under his control, I foolishly listened to his entreaties. What my manager wanted was a mammoth show to run in undisguised opposition to his late employer, Mr. Frank Fillis, who had returned to South Africa in the early part of 1903, and with whom he had fallen out.

I got to work and ordered a complete circus, a huge circus tent, a tent for the menagerie, waggons to carry circus, tents, seating, etc., and engaged a very fine and expensive circus company. The lot I despatched by

the Houston Line from Tilbury Docks, London, early in November, 1904, at a cost, before Capetown was reached, of nearly £6,000. This amalgamation was not a success. We could not take sufficient money in South Africa to pay the expenses ; as a matter of fact, the drawings for the combined show were very little more than for the menagerie only on the previous tour. Circus artistes alone cost me in the region of £400 per week, and I had to pay wages to a much bigger staff than on the first tour. In addition, travelling expenses became much heavier, as two special trains instead of one, as on the first tour, for which we were charged at so much per mile, were required to transport the show from place to place. Then again many of the smaller places that were well worth doing with the menagerie alone were absolutely out of the question with the huge and expensive circus-menagerie combination, which, I have no hesitation in saying, was, with the exception of Barnum and Bailey's, infinitely superior to any similar show seen in Great Britain in the course of my experience.

The latter part of this tour of South Africa, which was very hurried, was marred by a very distressing catastrophe, which involved the deaths of two South African members of the staff. While the show was on rail a spark from the engine ignited one of the circus waggons. When the outbreak was discovered the driver uncoupled this and another truck and drew them at top speed for a distance of nearly five miles for water to extinguish the flames, but before the water was procured the waggon was completely gutted, and among the ruins were found the charred



bodies of the two South Africans. They had been asleep in the waggon, in which they had preferred to travel instead of in the passenger carriages provided.

By the time it returned to Capetown my new combined show had, in addition to the £6,000 it had cost me to set it up, involved me in a loss of almost £5,000.

On the completion of this South African tour I sent the show over to Australia. Although I greatly reduced the circus company by bringing some of the artistes back to England, it was still too big and expensive. The cost of freightage and fares to Australia was actually £2,084. The voyage from Capetown to Fremantle, Western Australia, which occupied three and a half weeks, was made on the S.S. *Fifeshire*, which has since foundered. Business in Australia was much better than it had been in South Africa, although the journeys from place to place were much longer.

Another great difficulty that presented itself was due to the difference between the railway gauges of South Africa and Australia. As a matter of fact, there were two different gauges in the Commonwealth. All our waggons for transporting our huge show of rail were much too high for the Australian lines, and to meet the situation the wheels had to be taken off the waggons for each journey—a difficult and somewhat dangerous process. The two widths of gauges on the Australian railway lines, of course, added to the difficulties of transport. The show had frequently to be transferred from the broad to the narrow gauge,



and *vice versâ*, during a single journey, and this entailed no end of worry, labour and delay.

Just before the show left Capetown for Australia one of my sons, Douglas F. Bostock, who was then eighteen years of age, landed in South Africa, whither I had sent him, by doctor's orders, for the benefit of his health. When he accompanied the show to Australia, my manager obviously resented his presence, and within three months, after he experienced the difficulties of transport to which I have alluded, and when he had six months to go to complete his three years' agreement with me, he cabled me three months' notice that he was quitting my employment.

By this time the show had reached Melbourne, where, almost immediately after his arrival, my son contracted typhoid and pneumonia. After he had spent ten weeks in a private nursing home and a further two weeks in Melbourne recuperating, he sailed to Auckland, New Zealand, to which the menagerie and circus had preceded him. Judge of his amazement on his arrival at twelve noon to find that my manager and his wife and family, along with seven of my performing baboons, had sailed for England about three hours previously. No one was in charge of the show, which was in a state of chaos—a nice condition of affairs to confront a youth who had just recovered from a long and serious illness.

My son, having cabled me news of what had happened, stepped into the breach, and managed the show splendidly for a time. On receipt of the news he cabled I made up my mind to deal with the manager and the baboons on their arrival, and this, I may say

without going into details, I did to my entire satisfaction.

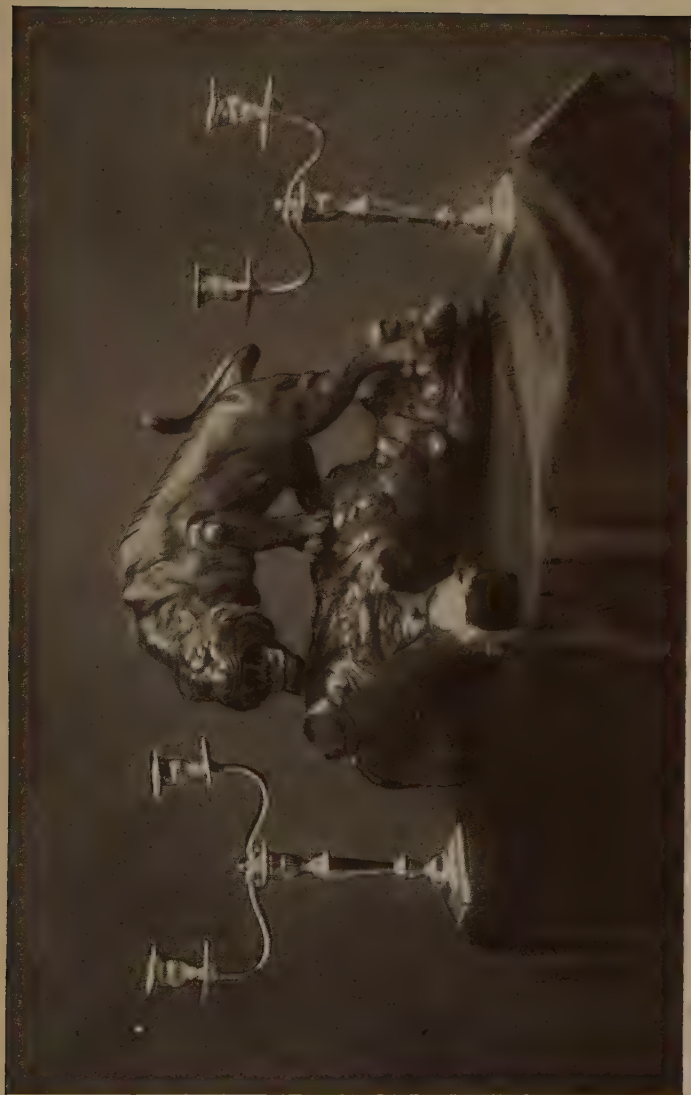
From New Zealand the show sailed for Sydney and then struck up towards Queensland. Arrangements had been made for an extensive tour in this district, and great expense had been incurred in advertising it, but a recurrence of the tick plague upset our plans. We were politely, but firmly, informed that we were at liberty to proceed into Queensland to fulfil our engagements, but that on our return we should be subjected to six months' quarantine. Six months' idleness would have been a serious matter from a financial point of view, so the visit to Queensland was cancelled, and the show worked back to Sydney and Melbourne. To these cities we returned too soon, and the result was that business was not as good as it had previously been. I accordingly decided to disband the show. The personnel who did not desire to remain in the Commonwealth I brought back home, while, acting on my instructions, my son had the entire show, with the exception of a few picked zoological specimens, auctioned at Melbourne. I told him to let the animals, etc., go for what they would fetch, as I did not want to bring them home owing to the enormous freightage their shipment from Australia to this country would incur. In these circumstances I did not expect the show to bring in record prices, but the sale was even poorer than I had anticipated. The personnel reached home in January, 1906, and that was the end of Bostock and Wombwell's Circus and Menagerie for South Africa, Australia and New Zealand; but in October, 1914, I purchased the

Royal Italian Circus and sent it on tour through South Africa, India, China, Japan, and the Straits Settlements, under the management of my son, Douglas F. Bostock. Details of this venture I shall furnish later.

## CHAPTER XVIII

*My Partner Refuses me an Interest in New Schemes—I Decide to Break Away from Him and Raise an Action in Court of Session—He Offers to Buy me Out, and I Agree, because of Foolish Partnership Agreement—A Glasgow Presentation—I Lose Money in Contract for Variety Shows and in Provincial House—I Start a Hippodrome in Ipswich—I Return to the Scottish Zoo and the Glasgow Hippodrome—Prospect of Opposition by Moss Empires, Ltd.—I Approach them, and they Join up with me—Disappointment and Disillusionment—I Buy Moss Empires, Ltd., Out—I Lose more Money and Close Down.*

I NOW return to the Scottish Zoo and the Glasgow Hippodrome, where, in 1904, certain events led me to reconsider my relations with Mr. Barrasford, my partner. Not content with being managing director of the Pavilion, Glasgow, which house, you will remember, he told me would never open, and that he himself would see to it, Mr. Barrasford arranged a partnership with the owner of the National Halls, Gorbals, Glasgow (next door to the Princess Theatre), which were to be altered, brought up to date, and opened as a first-class music hall under the name of the Palace. As soon as I learned of this project I approached Mr. Barrasford and suggested I should be given an interest in it. I declared my willingness to share in the cost of the alteration of the building, etc., and added that I did not think it was fair of him to embark on the Pavilion and Palace ventures without me, in view of the fact that he had one-half interest in my place, although he had put very



BRONZE TIGER PRESENTED TO THE WRITER BY HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE GLASGOW TOWN COUNCIL ON HIS RETIREMENT, AND SILVER CANDELABRA, PRESENTED TO MRS. E. H. BOSTOCK.





little money into it. Mr. Barrasford, however, had quite a different view of the matter, and although I repeated my request many times, both verbally and by letter, he absolutely refused to recognise me by allowing me to participate in either the Pavilion or the Palace scheme.

Moreover, it came to my knowledge that he had approached the owners of the Zoo property on his own account with the view of purchase. Had this gone further I might have been left out in the cold, but as I had a ten years' lease with an option of purchase, I stepped in and exercised the option, buying up the entire property. Over and above these things, the Britannia Theatre, London, had come to be a source of great worry and loss to me. Week after week I was called upon to make up deficiencies in the treasury there. Matters came to such a pass that I consulted a lawyer, who examined the deeds of copartnery applying to both places and advised me to call a halt at once and bring matters to a point with Mr. Barrasford. In short, I was determined to be recognised along with him at these other places in Glasgow or break away from him altogether. The Pavilion and the Palace were open by this time, and were affecting our business adversely ; my partner, so to speak, was killing the goose that had been laying the golden eggs for both of us. When, therefore, I saw that he was fully determined that I was to have no interest in the Palace Theatre in Glasgow, my mind was firmly made up to cut myself off completely from all business association with him. I had stood by him in Glasgow and supplied nearly all the money to put

the Zoo building and Hippodrome in order. I had also supported him at the Britannia Theatre, London, and I had financed him at the Alhambra Theatre, Paris, and I felt that his refusal to have me with him in this fresh venture was the essence of meanness. I accordingly raised an action in the Court of Session for dissolution of our partnership in the Glasgow Zoo and Hippodrome and the Britannia Theatre, and for a refund of the loan for his Paris scheme—in fact, for a general severance. When he saw that I actually meant business, Mr. Barrasford bestirred himself and enlisted the support of his friends and supporters in other towns where he had successful hippodromes. The result was that he was provided with money with which he offered to buy me completely out of the Glasgow business and to square the other items. I was very loath to relinquish my Glasgow concern, but in view of the very foolish partnership agreement I had signed, which had been drawn up by a chartered accountant and not by a lawyer—another great mistake—I was advised to sell and so get peace of mind. Here let me interject that prior to this date I had visited a lawyer for advice only once (that was in connection with my father's will twenty-six years previously), although I had been in business in quite a big way for twenty odd years all over Britain and the Continent, which will indicate that I conducted my various establishments on pretty straight lines.

I received a fairly good price for my building and stock and the business complete, and I went out on August 15th, 1904. Press and public alike regretted the severance of my connection with the Scottish Zoo

and Glasgow Hippodrome, since I had originated the business and had had all to do with it from its inception. At a public presentation and concert promoted by the Glasgow Corporation in the City Hall I received a magnificent illuminated address and signed album as tokens of esteem and respect on my leaving the city. These gifts are among my most treasured possessions.

The £5,000 I loaned for the Alhambra, Paris, was repaid, but I had to pay £3,500 to be released from my interest in the Britannia, London, in which I had already lost a sum of nearly £7,000 as my share in the scheme of alterations, redecoration, and in loss through business whilst open to the public. In return I had received not a shilling, so that the Britannia, London, was a disastrous speculation for me.

While the Scottish Zoo and Glasgow Hippodrome was at its zenith I was approached by many parties in Scotland to interest myself in schemes for the opening of two-houses-a-night hippodromes. I could have become managing director of several such concerns, but I declined, as I preferred to remain free and to look well after the business I had in hand and give my partner no chance for complaint. Furthermore, as I have already pointed out, I did not care for companies.

Next I was approached to run variety companies on a sharing basis at six theatres, all within fifty miles of Glasgow. I accepted this contract for six months, and lost a lot of money in the deal, owing to the fact that the public in these smaller towns—Kilmarnock, Kirkcaldy, Ayr, Clydebank, Coatbridge, and Falkirk—were not quite ready for variety shows. I was ahead

of the times in these places, so, instead of running the full six months, I paid £1,000 to be released from the contract when only about half of the time had passed, as I knew I should lose more money and have more worry in completing the contract. This, however, was not the worst. At the time I entered into this contract I was pressed to put £2,000 into one of these houses—the King's Theatre, Kilmarnock—on a second bond at 6 per cent. After a few inquiries I acquiesced, but when I came to run the place I found it was about the worst of the six towns for which I had contracted to provide variety shows. It turned out to be a proper white elephant, and after receiving one half-year's interest I got no more, and my £2,000 was tied up. Meanwhile the company which owned the place had gone into liquidation. Its shares had been held extensively by local people, who were advised by the liquidators and their solicitors that dubiety existed as to the validity of the first bond for £7,000 on the property. These officials thought it might be reduced if a case with that end in view were taken into court. The liquidators had no money, however, a fact which formed a complete obstacle to their embarking on proceedings. This led the shareholders to approach me, the proposal being that the liquidators should raise an action in the Court of Session for reduction of the £7,000 bond on the ground that it was not a real transaction, my share in the adventure being to guarantee the expenses. The advantage to me would be that if the £7,000 bond were wiped out, my bond for £2,000 would move up to the first place. After consultation with my lawyer, I agreed to finance the



ONE OF SEVERAL ILLUMINATED ADDRESSES PRESENTED TO THE WRITER.

[To face p. 186.]





action. The case had varying fortunes as it went along. My side was successful before the judge in the first instance, but the other side appealed to the Inner House in the Court of Session, where the judgment was reversed. Moved by the advice of counsel and others, I authorised an appeal to the House of Lords. After a prolonged period of waiting, the judgment of the Inner House of the Court of Session was sustained, and I was left with all the expenses to pay. From first to last, adding the legal expenses to the loss of principal and interest in the bond, this adventure cost me well over £7,000. This illustrates the risk that a business man is up against when he starts to lend money.

When I left in August, 1904, the Glasgow business was entirely in the hands of my late partner, and, although he made strenuous efforts in the way of booking up the best turns available, the Hippodrome gradually went down and down. Ere four months had elapsed since my departure feelers were put out with the view of my return to resume control of the place, but I did not consider the suggestion. As a matter of fact, by this time I had gone to have a look round Ipswich, forty miles from Norwich, with the view of finding a suitable opening for a hippodrome. This I hoped to run in connection with the Norwich business, as it is a great advantage to be able to offer artistes two or more weeks' engagements in the same neighbourhood. I found a site in Ipswich, got plans passed, and started to build a hippodrome on October 25th, two months after I had left the Glasgow house. The Ipswich Hippodrome was opened on March 27th,

1905, and did quite a nice business, and is still running successfully.

I also saw a new theatre or hippodrome at Colchester, eighteen miles from Ipswich, almost completed, and came within an ace of securing it. My intention was to have made my home in Ipswich, and to have managed Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester Hippodromes from there, but I am pleased that I did not succeed in my quest at Colchester, as for many years afterwards the house in question did very badly.

Soon after I had opened my hippodrome in Ipswich I was pressed to return to the Glasgow Zoo and Hippodrome, and yielded, but, as my readers may have guessed, not at the price at which I had gone out of the business. This was perhaps a daring thing to do, as by that time there were many variety houses in Glasgow and others in contemplation, and because of the difficulty there would be in getting good companies week by week in consequence of such extensive competition. The old place had, however, a tremendous fascination for me; I had made good there, and also made many friends, and I decided to take the risk. I arranged to resume possession on June 12th, 1905, and to reopen seven days later, after an absence of ten months. I left a man I considered to be very capable in charge of the Ipswich Hippodrome.

As a result of the previous success of the Zoo and Hippodrome, Moss Empires at this juncture were bent on getting a building near to my old place. As a matter of fact, they had acquired a place of ground near to St. George's Cross, about a quarter of a mile from my building, and on the site had erected a board

bearing the legend "Site of New Olympia to be erected by Moss Empires, Ltd." As soon as I had decided to return to my old place (about six weeks before I actually did so) it occurred to me that the New Olympia, if it went on, would be just too near to be pleasant, and I decided it would be a wise course to get Moss Empires interested in my place and thus eliminate opposition. I had an idea that this would be a strictly business firm, and if associated with them I should not be worried, as I had been by my late partner, by their starting other business on their own. I, therefore, approached Moss Empires on the subject, and finally arranged a deal with them on terms very advantageous to them, as they had no money to put into the concern at all. My building was to be let to them and myself at a very low rental. They did not, however, want to come in at once, and it was agreed that they should join up with me on the first Monday of October, which was the beginning of their financial year.

I accordingly had to run the place myself from July 19th until October 1st, and I am pleased to say that, although I was a few weeks in getting the ball rolling and I reopened in the middle of the summer, I, with the aid of my eldest son, who attended to the booking of the companies, restored prosperity to the old place within five weeks and had everybody happy. By the month of September we were in the heyday of success once more, and I began to regret my arrangement with Moss Empires, Ltd. Still there was the prospect of the large new building, the Olympia, going up near me, and I reassured myself that I had

acted for the best. But I regret to say that the results completely belied my hopes and expectations. We started away under the partnership title of Moss Empires and Bostock on October 1st, 1905, the arrangement being that Moss Empires, Ltd., were to engage and supply the artistes. We had a fairly good company to start with, and all my old patrons gathered round and wished me every success ; but a few weeks' experience of the place seemed to disappoint them, and they told me that I was not getting nearly such good companies as I provided when on my own account. So the business went down. My audiences would have accepted the position temporarily if they had thought I was engaging the companies myself, because they would have known that I had done my best, and they would have waited and said, " Oh, next week will be better " ; but no improvement took place, and I began to feel serious regret. I was again in the position that I had got into with Mr. Barrasford. My partners had two other houses in Glasgow, the Empire and the Coliseum. They had the entire interest in these concerns and only one-half in mine. It was, perhaps, not unnatural that they should give their own houses the best. That did not suit me. Protests on my part for about twenty-one months led to nothing, and at the end of two and a quarter years of the partnership they agreed to go out on my paying them £1,500. This put an end to Moss Empires' connection with me and the Scottish Zoo and the Glasgow Hippodrome on November 10th, 1907.

The property and capital in the concern had remained entirely mine, Moss Empires and Bostock



E. H. BOSTOCK AND FAMILY, 1906







paying me a nominal rent ; so I had only to step back and resume individual management. When I did this I found it well-nigh impossible to get companies. Moss Empires was a powerful organisation and was in a position to book in advance all the first-class performers who had not already been absorbed by other concerns, such as that of my former partner, Mr. Barrasford, and had actually done so. Each of these limited companies had a round of houses in which they could afford regular and continuous employment to artistes, and this gave them a preferential pull as regards bookings. The result was that I lost money week by week, a process that went on for eighteen months. During this period I was losing on an average about £100 a week, so I came to the conclusion that it was time to try something else.

Accordingly the Scottish Zoo and the Glasgow Hippodrome closed down, the menagerie stock being sold by auction on April 27th, 1909. I had previously offered the whole of my zoological specimens to the Corporation of Glasgow for a Corporation Zoo, and would have accepted a very low price for them ; indeed, had I been pressed, I would have made the Corporation a gift of them, as I was very anxious to see a zoological garden started in Glasgow, despite the fact that this would have been prejudicial to my own interests, inasmuch as I still had a travelling menagerie and its occasional visits to Glasgow to consider. The offer, however, was turned down by the Town Council, and the sale, which proved a fairly good one, had to proceed.

## CHAPTER XIX

*Roller Skating Craze in Glasgow—I Accept Bad Advice and Tear Down the Hippodrome—The Jungle in the Zoo Building—Wedding Ceremony in Presence of Lions—The Scottish Zoo and Variety Circus—Fickleness of Public Taste—I Run a Cinema and Sell my Stock to my Younger Brother—First Picture-House in Great Britain—Good Lets for Zoo Building—Outbreak of Great War—Building Commandeered—Menagerie's Unenviable Experiences—I get Zoo Building back from Military and Reopen it as Roller Skating Rink—Trouble with Hooligans.*

WHEN the roller skating craze spread to Glasgow and was being successfully exploited by the Winslow Skate Co., who had inaugurated a rink in a building they had erected in Victoria Road, Glasgow S.S., it occurred to me that by transforming the half of my building which had been occupied by the Zoo into a roller skating rink I might do well in meeting the public whim of the moment. With a bit of a hustle the rink was got ready before summer was actually on us. Attendance at the opening on May 31st, 1909, was by invitation, and I was honoured by the presence of a large number of members of the Glasgow Town Council, together with their wives. Our send-off was all that could be desired, except that it was a bit too warm for skating, but subsequently we did good business. Indeed, at times, especially on Saturday nights, the rink was very crowded, and patrons were wont to remark to me, "Oh, when it comes to the autumn and winter you will not have room for the people. What a pity you

could not make the place bigger." It was suggested to me that I should pull down the structure of the Hippodrome, which was, of course, closed, and use the entire building as a roller skating rink. If I did so, I was told, I should have the finest rink in Scotland, if not in Britain. Foolishly, I listened, decided that the suggestion was a good one, and set to work. I tore down the whole of the Hippodrome, the erection and furnishing of which had cost over £12,000 only six years previously. For the benefit of readers who never saw the Zoo and Hippodrome at Glasgow, I ought to explain that both the Zoo (animals' cages, etc.) and the Hippodrome were enclosed in a huge building which covered over an acre of ground in a splendid position, practically in the centre of Glasgow.

What a gigantic error I made in pulling down the Hippodrome, for hardly had the structure been dismantled than Glasgow was in the grip of the moving-picture craze. The Hippodrome, if I had left it intact, would have been ready even to the operating box, licence for opening, etc.—an admirable building for the purpose. The fever for roller skating on this occasion was but a passing phase. The demand began to diminish about the New Year after I had been in the business for about eight months, and I bitterly regretted my precipitancy in demolishing the Hippodrome.

My younger brother, Frank Charles Bostock, begged of me to let him have my Zoo building, the actual skating rink, for his Jungle Trained Animal Exhibition, which was then enjoying great success at the Exhibition Hall, Manchester. As the building had

been let for a Trade Exhibition he was obliged to vacate it, and, at his wits' end to find a place for his show, because every suitable building had been given over to roller skating, he appealed to me for my Zoo building. And, being anxious to meet my brother's wishes, I acquiesced and abruptly closed my roller skating rink on February 12th, 1910, and the following morning (Sunday) his stock arrived in Glasgow by special train from Manchester. With the assistance of an army of joiners, my brother managed to open to the public on February 19th, 1910, and did enormous business for nine weeks, when important engagements he had made over twelve months previously necessitated his closing down and returning to America.

During the last week of the Jungle, it is interesting to recall, a Glasgow couple were actually married in the Great Arena in presence of several lions. This packed the building, and many thousands more, eager to pay for admission, had to be turned away. The Jungle was under the management of Mr. Harry Tudor, and it was he who arranged the setting of the wedding.

With the departure of the Jungle to America, I was left with a big empty building, with no use for it in view. After deliberation I decided to rebuild the circus in the centre of the building with all the cages in position around it, and reopen the Scottish Zoo and Circus on the lines I had adopted twelve years previously, but in a much better style. I got to work in the slickest of fashions and ere long was on the way to the Continent to purchase zoological stock. In this quest I was pretty successful, and the Scottish Zoo

and Variety Circus was reopened on July 4th, 1900. I had engaged the Royal Italian Circus, then the property of Messrs. Volpi Brothers, for the opening, and added several special acts to strengthen the programme, and no other circus, I may say, have I ever heard so lavishly praised by the public. As for the Zoo, it was all that could be desired. I had gathered together a number of my old trainers and keepers who were very popular with the public, and this tended to strengthen the appeal of my show, which went off with the proverbial bang. The Italian Circus remained with me eight weeks. On account of previous engagements, it could not remain longer. It was followed by good companies which I changed every two weeks. Directly the Italian Circus departed, however, the revenue began to drop, and continued dropping, and it was with great difficulty I kept going until January 30th, 1911—just seven months after I reopened, following great expense and exertion to do so. This is but another of the many illustrations I have suffered of the fickleness of the public taste, and it indicated very plainly the risks run by an amusement caterer.

With the closing of the Circus my expenses were considerably reduced, and until April 1st, 1911, I ran a cinema show in the circus building in connection with the Scottish Zoo. Then I received a fair offer from my younger brother, F. C. Bostock, for my entire collection of animals and bars forming the cages, etc. I accepted his offer, and the entire collection went to the Crystal Palace, London, as one of the attractions of the Festival of the Empire Exhibition, where it opened



at Easter and remained during the entire summer season. Nearly all my menagerie staff went with it. At the end of the Exhibition the bulk of the animals went direct to Los Angeles for film work.

The Zoo-Circus building I let to Henglers, Ltd., who utilised it for a cinematograph exhibition for several months, after which, with my consent, they sublet it to my nephew, James Gordon Bostock, who had a ripe experience as an amusement caterer in America. He ran the building as a "Joytown"—a collection of all sorts of amusement devices, many of which had not been previously seen in Britain, which were free after payment on entering. Dancers were also catered for, but for this entertainment an extra charge was made. Superficially my nephew appeared to be making a fortune from his enterprise, but when he came to make up his accounts, he, to his dismay, found that his expenses far exceeded his drawings.

It was in 1902, ten years prior to his "Joytown" venture, that this nephew of mine paid me a visit for a few days at Glasgow. In the course of his stay he mentioned that he and several others had evolved a great scheme to be floated in Great Britain. This, he prophesied, would revolutionise the entire amusement business in this country.

"Well," I said to him, "what is this great thing? Why don't you tell me? Perhaps I can advise you."

"Oh, no," he replied, "I could not do that; I am pledged to secrecy, but you will see in good time. It will kill all other amusements."

"All right," I agreed. "If you won't tell me we



must be content to wait and see it when it comes along." So he left us without revealing his secret.

Several months later he returned from America, along with a lawyer and a financier. They came over to try the picture-house business, and they kept their project a dark secret as long as ever they could. Eventually they secured a shop in the Briggate, Leeds—one of the very best streets in that city. They altered this shop and fitted it up very tastefully, and then began operations. This was the first moving picture-house in this country, as we have since come to know these; and what was the result? They could not take sufficient to keep the place going. They were actually ahead of the times, which I myself have proved is quite possible, and so, after a trial extending over a period of about eight months, they gave up Britain as a hopeless proposition and returned to America.

What has happened since then is common knowledge. Had the Leeds speculation come up to the Yankees' expectations, they would have forged ahead and secured sites in every town in Britain, and have thus got clean ahead of us all. So I say that it was a very good job that they went to Leeds to get this "Waterloo." If they had consulted me as to a likely town in which to start their operations, I could, I am sure, have made a better selection.

I don't want my readers to imagine that this was the first exhibition of moving pictures in this country; far from it, because I myself had exhibited them at the Scottish Zoo as a side-show soon after this was opened in 1897, the charge for admission being 1*d.*, while in

the winter of the same year I exhibited a pantomime film (beautifully coloured by hand by a Paris firm), which was seen on both sides of the circus and which proved a great attraction.

During the following year moving-picture shows were to be seen on every fair ground in Britain. These shows had very elaborate front entrances and they did enormous business, and they were the actual fore-runners of the cinemas which, about 1904, sprang up in mushroom fashion all over the country.

But, to resume the thread of my narrative, when my nephew removed his "Joytown" from the Zoo-Circus building in May, 1912, this was again empty and on my hands. Now and again I let it for exhibition purposes as required, but frequently it stood untenanted for many weeks at a time. Next I ran the place myself as a winter carnival for seven weeks during the Christmas and New Year season of 1913-14. Then followed other exhibitions, including dog shows, poultry shows, flower shows, etc. For eight weeks the building was rented by Chapman and Alexander, the great evangelists, who built an enormous stage at one end to accommodate 1,500 people and seated the rest of the building to accommodate about 9,000. Messrs. Chapman and Alexander proved a powerful magnet for the crowd, and frequently not only was every seat occupied and hundreds compelled to stand, but many people were denied admission. These audiences were the biggest seated gatherings I had ever seen, except at football matches, and the authorities compelled these people to increase the number of exits from the building in case of emergency.

This brings me down to July, 1914, when my own (Bostock and Wombwell's) menagerie was on tour in Scotland. I brought it to my building in New City Road, where it enjoyed great success for three weeks. It left Glasgow exactly one week before the outbreak of the Great War.

I had obtained some very good lets of the building for the autumn and winter of this year, starting off with the City Flower Show during the first week of September, to be followed by three Trade Shows organised by the Glasgow Corporation. With the outbreak of war, however, these bookings were at once cancelled. On the evening of August 4th, 1914, I had offered the building gratuitously to the military for the purposes of mobilisation, but on the grounds that all their arrangements had been completed they declined my offer. Fifteen days later, however, several military gentlemen arrived to inspect the building on a Saturday forenoon, and, having done so, promptly commandeered it as a billeting centre for troops. I was informed that not more than 1,100 men would be sleeping in the building at one time, and that 500 or thereabouts would arrive that night (Saturday). The first detachment to put up at the Zoo building had apparently been flooded out somewhere near Girvan, where they were under canvas, and I prepared to give the lads every assistance.

I asked the officers who made the arrangements what the men would sleep on, and was told that they would lie on the hard boards, but I prevailed upon the officers to permit me to get palliasses and straw with which to render the men more comfortable. I was

instructed to get 1,000 palliasses made and also to procure sufficient straw to fill these. This interview took place at 11 a.m. on Saturday, and by 8 p.m. the same day I had procured 300 palliasses and the straw necessary to fill them. These palliasses were made by Messrs. Dallas & Co., Milton House, Cowcaddens, Glasgow, who had the balance of the order ready on the Monday following.

The first batch of lads, who had scarcely a dry thread on them, arrived about 5.30 on the Saturday night, and, after what they had gone through, they were very glad to see the palliasses, which they themselves willingly filled with straw. Many more recruits arrived on the Monday, and it was my duty to count them, so as to be able to present my account at the rate of 3*d.* per man per night.

After I had filled the *rôle* of lodging-house keeper for several months, the Zoo building was taken over for the storage of aeroplanes, which were mostly packed in large cases and were handled by a small staff. The stock of aeroplanes varied; sometimes there were only a few, while at other times almost the entire floor space was occupied with cases which were at times built two high. I often speculated on the result of a stray bomb dropped through the roof on the Zoo building or a fire engineered by some malicious or foreign agent! The loss would have been stupendous. The storage of aeroplanes at the Zoo building went on until 1917. No arrangement in regard to rental had been made since the cessation of the billeting of troops, and the upshot was that, along with my solicitor, I had to go to Edinburgh to state

my case, and then I had to accept just what the authorities liked to give me in the way of rental, which in reality was a mere acknowledgment.

Since shortly after the outbreak of war my travelling menagerie had been experiencing very unenviable times on the road. It was with the greatest difficulty that sufficient staff to work it was retained, while another heart-break was the problem of forage for the horses and other animals, this being now supplied under a rationing system. But the greatest of all difficulties, in England especially, was presented in the lighting restrictions, which imposed a severe handicap on a show under a canvas roof.

In these pages I have frequently referred to my annual winter engagement of seven weeks at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London. One or other of our menageries—my mother's or one of mine—had fulfilled this engagement for thirty-five years without a break. In 1916, I naturally expected that my menagerie would again appear at the Royal Agricultural Hall, and you can judge of my feelings when in the third week of October of that year I was informed that the lessee of the hall had made other arrangements, on the grounds of economy, with an amateur menagerist, who had previously secured four or five of my discarded animal waggons, and that Bostock and Wombwell's menagerie was not wanted. This was one of the biggest disappointments of my life, not because of the loss of revenue, for, truth to tell, the engagement had never at any time yielded a profit, but because it robbed the menagerie of a covering at one of the worst periods of the winter and



deprived the staff of the much-needed rest to which they had been looking forward. The struggle for existence we had been waging daily, owing to shortage of staff and the lighting restrictions, made the withdrawal of this engagement very much more serious than it would have been in normal times. Immediately I was notified that our engagement had been cancelled I wrote everywhere in the kingdom where there was a building capable of taking a menagerie for the winter, but it was a fruitless quest. Every building of this kind was then occupied by the military or was being used for munitions. My own building in Glasgow, as I have shown, was also in the possession of the authorities, who blankly refused to consider vacating same, so I had no alternative but to allow the menagerie to remain out in the open. But that was not the worst. At many towns visited the menagerie was not allowed to take up a stance on the ground that it was impossible for us to carry on and comply with the lighting restrictions. It was, indeed, a terrible experience.

I was at my wits' end to know what to do for the best. My youngest son, Jack, was in charge of the menagerie, and he worked like a galley slave to keep the menagerie going until he had to join the Army early in March, 1917. My second son, who was in charge of the Ipswich Hippodrome, had joined up in March, 1915, and was shortly followed into the Army by my eldest son, who was my assistant and right-hand in Glasgow. My only other son was in charge of the Royal Italian Circus, by this time in India, so that I was left with all my businesses, which had been built



up, so to speak, around and for my family, with not one of them to assist me. I was disposed to break up the menagerie, which would have meant the shooting of the zoological stock, as during war-time I could not have found anyone to purchase them. As an alternative I should have liked to have given them away on account of the difficulty and expense of getting food for them, but I could not think of anyone who would be willing to accept them as a gift. So I struggled on against adversity. I decided to try Leeds for the winter, and managed to get ground from the Market officials, but, despite the signed agreement giving me the site, the police did their utmost to prevent me exhibiting in Leeds. A Press campaign, supported by the ubiquitous letter-to-the-editor fiend, gave the people the impression that we were a real menace to the city, as it was impossible to exhibit in compliance with the lighting restrictions, and the result was that our business was absolutely crippled. However, my people managed to stand in Leeds for a month, after which they proceeded on tour. They encountered very wintry weather, and, in consequence, business was poor. When my youngest son, Jack, went to the Army, I induced my cousin, Mr. Frank Bostock, who had previously managed my No. 2 Collection, and who was over military age, to take charge of the menagerie. From Easter, 1917, business improved greatly, and with good weather in prospect I began to feel easier. The menagerie made tracks for Scotland, where the war-time lighting restrictions were not nearly so rigorous as in England. My cousin enjoyed a very good season in Scotland,

but once we were into the autumn I had to consider where I was going to put the menagerie for the winter. I again made early application to the military authorities to have the Zoo building restored to me by the end of September, 1917, and took great pains to make certain that they would not lose sight of my request. By this time the stock of aeroplanes in the Zoo building had been greatly reduced, and I was mightily pleased to learn that the machines which remained were to be cleared out to let me have the use of the building. I got possession of it again in the middle of October, 1917, and on the 28th of the month I brought the menagerie thither, registering a vow to keep it there until the war was over. I added a few amusements to the show, and we enjoyed splendid business for about four months. When dulness set in, I had to consider to what use I should put the Zoo building. In spite of the fact that its maple floor, which at great expense I had put down in 1909 for roller skating, had been greatly damaged by the military occupation, I believed I could open the building as a roller skating rink once more and do good business. To this optimistic view I was assisted by the fact that two roller skating rinks were open in England—one in London and the other in the Midlands. After some investigations I decided the scheme was by no means hopeless, but the supply of skates, when I came to consider this, was a bit of a problem. Importation of these from the United States was impossible, and new supplies were not available in this country. I happened to have about 400 pairs in store at Norwich, and also a few at Ipswich and Paisley, in which towns I had previously run

skating rinks. I endeavoured to augment this supply by advertising my need in the newspapers, and a further 430 pairs, which had been held as security for a debt in Glasgow during the previous rinking craze, were forthcoming, and thus equipped I felt justified in reopening the Zoo building as a roller skating rink. I cleared out all the extra amusements I had installed and concentrated the menagerie on one side of the building, and on the other side fitted up a very temporary skating rink.

The opening of the rink, in the middle of February, 1918, I shall never forget. The success of the venture was an eye-opener. It caught us somewhat, if not wholly, unprepared. We had reckoned on perhaps a steady stream of patrons, but what we actually experienced on the opening night was a veritable avalanche. The cloakroom for gents was a temporary structure, and it was here we were to have trouble before the first evening's session was over. All went well at the skating, although among the 500 odd skaters there was a rough and unruly element. No one was allowed to wear a hat whilst skating, but the majority of the men present wore caps, and these they kept in their pockets whilst on the rink. The others, of course, placed their hats, coats, sticks, and umbrellas in the cloakroom, and when the bell sounded for the cessation of skating at 10 p.m. and after the band had played the National Anthem, a crowd lined up at the cloakroom for the return of their hats, etc. Two women—space did not permit of a greater number—dealt out the articles as quickly as possible, but the skaters grew impatient, and this provided an opening

for the hooligan element to pursue their nefarious designs.

When they had concentrated together they rushed the cloakroom and burst in one of the sides of the structure, which was razed to the floor. Next they helped themselves, and, of course, carried off articles they had not put into the cloakroom. In their quest for plunder the hooligans made a speciality of top-coats, while hats, for which they had no desire, were ruthlessly trodden underfoot. Having got all the "booty" they could carry off, the raiders quickly cleared out and we were left to "face the music" of those whose articles of wear had disappeared.

I found I had about forty victims to deal with, and, I can assure you, I was not at all enamoured of the situation. The majority of them realised, however, that I was not really responsible for what had happened, and some of them, having identified their hats and pressed them into something like their normal shape, put them on their heads and went home.

A number of the sufferers came to see me the following day, and, because I sympathised with them, I, without admitting any liability, disbursed a sum of about £15 amongst them. This taught me a lesson, and I forthwith placed an insurance against a repetition of hooliganism. Furthermore, I at once enlarged and improved the cloakroom and made arrangements for a number of police constables to be on duty in its vicinity about closing time. It was, however, very difficult to get police at this period, as their numbers were so reduced on account of their call to the Army.

In consequence of these precautions we had no

more trouble at the cloakroom, but I had worry and vexation in plenty from other quarters. The period under review was early in 1918 when the Great War was at its height. Workers, especially those employed in munition factories, were making big wages and had "money to burn." My skating rink became a popular afternoon and evening resort of many of them, and I have to confess that their conduct was not as good as their cash. They were quite a different class of people from the *clientèle* that supported me when I opened the rink in 1909. The latter had undoubtedly been driven out by the rougher element.

Still the rink was a paying proposition, and, even although our patrons were a bit boisterous, why worry? Strange as it may seem, their unruliness had no untoward result in the form of accidents, whereas in 1909, when we had a well-behaved *clientèle* and fast skating and horse-play were unknown, there were frequent accidents on the rink. A number of skaters sustained broken wrists and arms through falling, while the quantity of sal volatile utilised to restore patrons, particularly ladies, who had fainted was amazing. This, of course, goes to show that our war-time patrons, although disposed to horse-play, were well hardened and able to take care of themselves.



## CHAPTER XX

*Alarming, but Amusing, Incident at the Glasgow Hippodrome—The Paint that Came off—Good Business in Skating Rink—End of Great War—Menageries on the Road again—Two Tragedies—Further Enterprises in Scotland—I have “Walk Over” into Glasgow Town Council and Return to Chamber Unopposed—I am Appointed Justice of the Peace.*

WRITING of the sacking of the skating rink cloakroom in the previous chapter reminded me of an alarming, but at the same time amusing, incident that occurred at the Glasgow Hippodrome a few weeks after its opening in 1902. In our hurry to get the tradesmen out and the public in, we had left the seating in the gallery unpainted. This was plain, running seating without backs, and provided accommodation for 1,200 patrons, at a tariff of 3*d.*, the prices of admission to the other parts being 1*s.* and 6*d.* In accordance with arrangement, the painters returned on a certain Sunday to paint the gallery seating. It was a quick job, the timber being given two coats of paint, the second coat with varnish and gold to ensure quick drying.

I remember the day well. It was calm and humid, and we were doubtful of the paint drying in time for patrons to take seats in the gallery the following night. About six o'clock on Monday night, however, the painters, after an inspection of the seating, pronounced it quite dry, and so it appeared to the touch. But our



patrons, after they had been seated for a few minutes, had a different version. Long before the first performance was over we were threatened with numberless actions for damages, and it was with a sigh of relief I saw the Hippodrome empty at 8.45 p.m.

The amusing part of the incident occurred when our patrons got outside in the daylight and started comparing suits and dresses to determine who had brought away the greatest amount of paint. The queue waiting to be admitted to the second house were in no way deterred by the paint-soiled clothing displayed to them, but they prepared against damage to their own clothes by purchasing newspapers to put below them, and the newsvendors did a roaring business that night.

With the exercise of a little tact I managed to placate the worst "grouzers" amongst the galleryites with a sum of less than £5, whereas the incident might have cost me hundreds. This easy settlement was due primarily to my popularity with the Glasgow people, who recognised that I had always given them value for their money. The painters were early on the scene the following morning, and by means of a strong preparation they removed all the paint from the gallery seating, and this was never painted again.

With the skating rink in one half of the Zoo building and the menagerie in occupation of the other half, I continued to do good business during 1918. The rink continued to draw the crowds, for a similar building with a maple floor was not in offer to the Glasgow public, while I had cornered nearly every available pair of roller skates in the country. Thus I

managed to recover some of the capital I had lost in the 1909 craze when about a dozen rinks of various sizes were catering for the public.

Then came the finish of the War, and, in March, 1919, the release of my youngest son, Lieut. John Reginald Wombwell Bostock, who prior to joining up had been the actual manager of the menagerie for three years. With his return I deemed it was time for Bostock and Wombwell's menagerie to return to the road. I accordingly made John Reginald a present of the outfit—lock, stock and barrel—and, preparatory to his setting out, called in the horses I had loaned to the Corporation of Glasgow, with whom they had been working for their keep and a small payment for nineteen months. To make up the complement required I bought many other horses. I had to pay fabulous prices for them, one roan work gelding costing me a sum of £172; in fact, everything was then at a terrible price. I also called in my two 6 h.p. traction engines built by Chas. Barrell & Sons, Thetford, and splendid tools, which were both on Government jobs, and the good old menagerie, then 114 years in existence, was sent on the road once more.

My son made direct for England, and there did most extraordinary business, the public being very keen on all kinds of amusements and having cash for them all. But alas! after twenty-one months of wonderful success, unprecedented in the 114 years' existence of the menagerie, my son, on December 14th, 1920, met with a motor accident between Rugeley and Hednesford, when the traction engines and their loads were held up by a fall of snow in the dark and my son had

gone to procure lamps, and on returning he came upon the waggons suddenly, and applying his brakes his little car skidded badly into one of them, and he was very badly hurt, which, after he had suffered intensely for eight days, proved fatal. He bequeathed the menagerie to me, and in his will expressed the hope that I would keep the show going if I could find a suitable manager for it, as he would not like it to be disposed of. That wish I have conscientiously tried to fulfil.

I omitted to mention that another of my sons, Lieut. A. Gordon Bostock, died on January 12th, 1919, at the Military Hospital, Dovercourt. He succumbed to pneumonia following influenza. To accentuate the tragedy of his death, he had been married only four months and was within three days of his discharge after four and a half-year's service. The loss of these two splendid fellows cast a gloom over my family, and my dear wife has never really recovered from the blows.

The roller skating was continued in the Zoo building after the menagerie had gone in April, 1919, and did well until nice summer weather kept my patrons out of doors. When the business had dwindled considerably I was approached by the British Motor Transport Company, who desired to purchase the building for a super-garage and repair shop. A deal was concluded, and I relinquished possession of the Zoo building after an occupation extending over twenty-one years.

The menagerie, in accordance with the request of my late son, I leased to my brother-in-law, Mr. H. F. Birkett, who had previously managed it for me for

eleven years. He had given it up in 1911 to take up farming near Ipswich. On resuming control he ran the menagerie for three years, and on his giving it up a second time the show was leased to my cousin, Mr. Frank Bostock, who, at the time of writing, is still in possession. Bostock and Wombwell's Menagerie is now in its 121st year and seems to be just as popular as ever.

We will now leave the menagerie and deal with my activities in other directions. Soon after my return to the Scottish Zoo and Hippodrome in June, 1905, I prospected in other towns, and the outcome was that I built a semi-temporary hippodrome in the centre of Paisley. This I opened to the public on October 14th, 1906, and was quite pleased with the measure of success which attended the venture. Then I secured ground and built a hippodrome at Hamilton which was opened exactly a year later. This was even more successful than the Paisley venture, and as a result of my success a syndicate was inspired with the idea of purchasing a small hall (the Victoria Hall) to run in opposition to me. On learning of this project I got busy and baulked the opposition by purchasing the Victoria Hall myself.

Next I bought the Pavilion, Wishaw, which I also conducted on variety lines, and a year or two later I purchased ground at Blantyre, on which I erected a building which, in addition to providing a picture-house, contains two shops and two dwelling-houses. During the War the New Century Theatre at Motherwell came into the market, and this I promptly snapped up to prevent others acquiring it to run the same class

of business as I conduct at Hamilton Hippodrome, two miles distant. The same thing happened at Ipswich, where the Lyceum Theatre came into the market, and I purchased it to eliminate the danger of opposition. It will thus be seen that, if I have been somewhat reckless in the building and acquisition of halls, I have not been lazy as an amusement caterer.

The Paisley Hippodrome, I regret to say, caught fire about an hour after closing-time on February 29th, 1916. The building, which was inadequately insured, was completely destroyed, and as I was unable to renew my lease of the site, I could not rebuild. I have since purchased a very good site in the town of pirms and poets, and on this I hope to erect an up-to-date house before very long.

Mention of this fire recalls the disastrous outbreak at the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, on July 7th, in 1925. For four winters I had supplied the Corporation of Glasgow with Bostock and Wombwell's Menagerie and a first-class circus at the annual carnival conducted in that hall, and held a contract to repeat same when the devastating fire occurred. As a matter of fact, I had just commenced to give out contracts in connection with the 1925-26 carnival. The Kelvin Hall, while of enormous size, was of a temporary character, and the flames devoured it within a few hours.

Plans have been passed by the Glasgow Dean of Guild Court and contracts placed by the Corporation of Glasgow for a magnificent new building on the same site. This, it was expected, would have been completed by November, 1926, but at the time of writing this seems impossible. When the new hall is



completed I hope to furnish both circus and menagerie for the first Christmas and New Year Carnival to be held there, in place of those for which I held contracts prior to the devastating fire.

To turn to a fresh sphere of activity, towards the end of July, 1908, I was approached and pressed very hard to offer myself as a candidate for a Glasgow Town Council vacancy that had occurred in the Cowcaddens of 16th Ward, in which the Zoo was situated. The vacancy was caused by the retirement of Mr. John Dallas, J.P., whom I had known personally for ten years. I consented to my candidature, never dreaming that I should be elected, but judge of my surprise when a few days later I learned that I was without a rival and that I had been duly elected a member of Glasgow Town Council—a “walk-over” on which I was heartily congratulated by the sitting members of the Council and by many of the general public.

What a joke, I reflected—a man who had spent so much of his life on the move with a travelling menagerie and in minding nobody’s business but his own, appointed to take part in the requirements of a large city like Glasgow. But joke or no joke, once I was a member of the Council, I took a serious view of my duties, but was prudent enough to move warily until I had found my bearings. I had only fifteen months to run to complete the three years’ term for which Mr. Dallas had been elected. What was going to happen when I offered myself for re-election was the subject of much good-natured chaff by my colleagues round the Council Board, but the prophesied test did not materialise; they were absolutely





THE WRITER, E. H. BOSTOCK, AT FIFTY.

[To face p. 214.]



astounded when no opponent appeared to contest my seat, and I enjoyed a second "walk-over." Thus my two elections had involved me in practically no expense. The other members of the Council were curious to know the nature of the charm I had worked on the Cowcaddens Ward, as the electors there were considered both fastidious and changeable.

I sat on this occasion for two years, when, like my predecessor, I resigned. My chief reason for relinquishing my seat was the encroachment of my public duties on my home and business life. Living among my constituents, I was working all the time. This was accentuated by the fact that at that time there was a great deal of distress in the city. My ward was a very poor one, and there was a continuous trek of distressed people to my door seeking advice and assistance. I was very handy to the poor folks, and, furthermore, I did not discourage their visits. I was always willing to listen to their tales of woe. I had, of course, to take details of every case laid before me, so that I could have it dealt with and also prevent overlapping. These details I had to enter up in book form, and that was quite a job in itself.

But ultimately this depressing work got on my nerves. My health gave way, and I was rendered quite unfit for my own business. I felt that as an amusement caterer I must return to a cheerier atmosphere, and I resigned from the Council, hoping my constituents would find a successor who would not take matters quite so seriously as I had done.

The Corporation, on my retirement, presented handsome gifts to Mrs. Bostock and myself. I don't know

their reason for so doing, unless it was for doing my work and keeping quiet about it. Later, in 1917, I was appointed a Justice of the Peace, so that I became once more practically a public servant. To those who have not been thus honoured, let me say that they can have no idea of the many and various duties that devolve upon the holder of this office. Since my appointment I seem to have spent the greater part of my time signing papers, the introduction of the dole leading to a further encroachment on same.

Albeit, I greatly appreciated the honour bestowed upon me, inasmuch as it showed that my twenty-nine years in Glasgow had not been spent in vain. Busy man though I am, because of the extensive and far-flung nature of my business, I am still pleased to give any service in my power to the community.

## CHAPTER XXI

*I Purchase the Royal Italian Circus and make Good Deterioration of its Transport, etc.—Circus on Theatre Stages—A Successful Season in Britain—Outbreak of Great War—I Send the Royal Italian Circus to South Africa—Delay of One Day owing to Presence of German Submarine at Mouth of Mersey—An Elephant's Escapade—First Tour in South Africa a Success, but Second a Failure—Effects of the War—Anti-British Element in Population—Permit to Land in Australia Refused—Troubles in Getting to India—Worries of our Advance Agent—Enormous Business in Calcutta Theatre—Long Train Journey to Fulfil Contract in Bombay Theatre—Terrific Heat Experienced—Visits to Java, Borneo, Sumatra, Siam, China, and Japan—Emperor of Japan Patronises our Show at Tokio.*

I MENTIONED, at the end of Chapter XVII., that I had sent a second circus to South Africa in 1914. The facts are as follows: On his return from Australia, after the break-up of the circus and menagerie at Melbourne in 1905, my third son, Douglas, was extremely restless, and, although he had been managing my menagerie for two years and was then managing the Hippodrome, Ipswich, for me, I felt sure that he would welcome an opportunity to get back to the Colonies.

I kept my eyes open for something which I thought would fit the situation as far as Douglas was concerned, and I deemed I was in the way of getting the right thing when, in July, 1913, I was offered the Royal Italian Circus, which was then touring in the South of England. This business had changed hands twice since its originators, the Volpi Brothers, had disposed

of it and retired, and by this time it was rather far down the scale, the deterioration of its transport and effects being particularly pronounced. In it, however, were still the elements of a splendid show (the trained animals, for instance, were still wonderful), and immediately I had seen the performance, it struck me that this circus was the very thing for the Colonies—and Douglas. I therefore consulted with my son, and, as I had expected, he was ready to fall in with my scheme.

I thereupon purchased the Royal Italian Circus and put Douglas, whose place at the Ipswich Hippodrome had been taken by a new manager, in charge of it. I took possession on July 29th, 1913, at Bexhill, Sussex, and set to work at once to reconstruct the transport, etc., and also to augment the show, in order to complete the touring season, which, for a circus, usually ends about the middle of October. I aimed to have an entirely new outfit, suitable for South Africa, Australia, etc., ready for the following year.

The remainder of this season was fairly good, and prior to the end of it I conceived the idea of trying this show on theatre stages, as nearly all the animals were small (ponies, dogs, monkeys, sea lions, birds, goats, etc.), and the show, of course, had the usual complement of riders, acrobats, clowns, etc. Following a few weeks' rehearsal, when the tenting season was over, I introduced the Royal Italian Circus on my own stage at the Ipswich Hippodrome, and then in my Norwich Hippodrome. Next followed a four weeks' engagement at Nottingham, after which the circus appeared in Edinburgh for four weeks and a like period at Hengler's Circus, Glasgow.



This brought us into the middle of March, by which time an entirely new outfit was ready for the overseas tour of the circus. In the meantime, however, I had amended my plans somewhat by deciding to keep the circus, as I had reconstructed it, for one whole season in Britain before sending it to Capetown in time for the South African season in December, 1914. During this season at home the circus did very well until the Great War upset things. When war was declared the show was at Barmouth in Wales, and from this point onwards business was very bad.

All arrangements had been made for the South African tour. The artistes, who had been booked for the season in the home country, had also been engaged for South Africa, as in this way we had been able to get advantageous terms from them. We had also accepted terms from a firm of shippers for the freight of the entire outfit from Liverpool to Capetown, embarkation having been arranged to take place during the first or the second week of November.

The advance agent and a few of the artistes left Tilbury by S.S. *Dover Castle* on Thursday, November 5th, and had a splendid passage. The rest of the artistes and the staff, the whole of the live-stock, and all the paraphernalia for the show left Liverpool by S.S. *Runic* on Friday, November 13th. This was a day later than had been arranged, the delay being due to the presence of a German submarine at the mouth of the Mersey. The weather just then was at its very worst, as it often is in November, and during the first five days of the voyage a very rough time was experienced, and it was a mercy that the waggons and live-

stock were not washed overboard. Luck, however, was with them, and when Capetown was reached, in twenty-two days, everybody and everything were in good shape, as, after five days' fury, the storm had abated, and during the remainder of the trip ideal weather had been enjoyed.

The circus opened on December 10th, 1914, at Capetown, and was an instantaneous success. It remained in Capetown for four weeks, which was quite a long stop in a town of 85,000 inhabitants. Next the circus journeyed to Wynberg, eight miles by road, and remained there for a week. The next stance was at Malmesbury, fifty-four miles distant, and this journey had to be undertaken by rail, to suit which method of travel our transport had been specially arranged.

Just prior to the departure of the circus for South Africa, I had acquired and added to it a young female elephant, about 7 feet in height. On being taken to the railway station at Wynberg to be loaded on the train, this elephant bolted and got clean away in the darkness. Men on horseback were sent to overtake and capture her, but their pursuit was futile, for she did not stop running until she had covered the eight miles back to Capetown, where she halted on the spot which had been occupied by the circus for four weeks. The horsemen, who had followed in her wake right to this spot, had no power over the runaway, and, finding they could not induce her to return with them, they hurried back to Wynberg to report. Thereupon my son dispatched a 5-ton steam tractor, which was used for hauling purposes and for driving the dynamo

which generated electric light for the show, to Capetown. The men who went with the tractor found the elephant still on the spot where she had been found by her pursuers on horseback ; she was evidently waiting for them. They quickly hitched her to the tractor, behind which she trundled back to Wynberg Station, where, at a second attempt, she was loaded with very little difficulty. Thereafter this elephant gave no trouble. On the contrary, she was soon trained to give great assistance in loading the heavy waggons on to the railway trucks, and she was then the last of the animals to get into her box.

Business was very good all through this season, although the country was rather upset by the War. The show returned to Capetown, where it opened for a second time on December 10th, 1915, but what a different reception was experienced on the return visit. Although the circus talent had been changed and augmented, it was impossible to enthuse the people of Capetown. They were in the grip of war fever, and in no mood for amusement. Accordingly we lost a lot of money in Capetown on this occasion. This, moreover, was the unfortunate order of things throughout the second tour, especially in the Orange Free State.

As my readers will remember, the Italians had come into the War by this time, and the title, the Royal Italian Circus, did not then assist our business, except among the actually loyal subjects. But most of these, especially the younger men, were away on military service in German East and West Africa, and, be it noted, among those left behind there were a great

many who were not kindly disposed towards Britain or her Allies.

The circus on this occasion followed a route slightly different to that it had taken on the first tour. It went by Mafeking and travelled as far north as Salisbury, Bulawayo and Livingstone. These towns, as far as their population was concerned, were very good, but elsewhere we were losing heavily all the time.

In view of the disastrous turn things had taken on account of the War, my son made strenuous efforts to obtain a permit to land the circus in Australia, which was, of course, included in our overseas trip, but in this he was doomed to failure. The authorities, while they would permit the landing of horses, ponies, dogs, etc., from England, absolutely refused to sanction their entry from South Africa.

Matters were looking pretty serious, and I was beside myself with worry of one sort or another. Business at my variety houses, as in all others, was at a very low ebb, while my travelling menagerie at home was, as I have outlined in a previous chapter, encountering all manner of difficulties, particularly in regard to stabling, lighting, and food for the horses and other animals. Three of my sons were in the Army, and the entire weight of my various businesses was thrown on my own shoulders, and I felt like giving way under the strain.

Meantime my son in South Africa was continually asking for advice by letter and cable, and ultimately I told him to break up the circus and sell it or give it away in order to save the expense of the freight home

to Britain, where there was now, on account of the War and the problems it had created, no use for the stock and paraphernalia. I also instructed him to send all the artistes and staff home, although this would entail considerable expense. But apart from the cost, this was no easy matter. The artistes held contracts for the season, and by closing at this time we were cutting the season short. The performers, therefore, did not want to return home. This caused a deadlock, and all the while we were incurring a heavy loss weekly. Then came another cable from my son. He asked me if I would sanction his going to India with the circus and finance him for the journey. He explained that he could get a boat from Durban to Bombay in five weeks' time, the cost being in the region of £1,800. I replied sanctioning the fresh enterprise, and the circus accordingly headed for Durban, where it exhibited for two weeks prior to shipment for India. So far so good.

By the first boat after I had acquiesced in his suggestion, my son had rushed his advance agent, a man of many languages, off to Bombay, to advertise and generally arrange for the arrival of the circus. Judge of my surprise and vexation when, nine days before the day of sailing from Durban to Bombay, I received from my son a cable announcing that the ship which was to have carried the entire outfit to India had been commandeered by the Admiralty, and asking for advice. I replied, "Try for another steamer from Durban or any other port." My son acted on this advice, and he eventually arranged for a Japanese vessel to convey the circus from East London to Calcutta, and this,



too, at a much cheaper rate than had been arranged for the trip from Durban to Bombay. The difficulty now was to get in touch with the advance agent in order to acquaint him of the altered arrangements. A cable was despatched to him, but when the party began their twenty-three days' sail from East London no reply had been received from him. The agent, it transpired, did receive the wire, but not before he had made all arrangements for Bombay.

I told you, at the outset of this chapter, of my success with the circus on theatre stages at home, and the advance agent for the Indian tour had been instructed that, if he experienced any great difficulty in getting sites on which to erect the circus tents, he was to endeavour to arrange for the production of the show in good theatres. There is, as a matter of fact, great difficulty in arranging a stance in or near the big cities of India. Application for a site must be in months before it is required, while not more than two travelling circuses are allowed each year. Bombay, it turned out, had already had its "ration" of circus entertainment, so in the circumstances our advance agent tried for the alternative of a theatre. He succeeded in arranging terms for the production of the show in the finest theatre of Bombay—a magnificent building, equal, if not superior, to any we have in Britain.

These arrangements the agent concluded in ignorance of the developments at Durban, and in the expectation of the circus arriving in Bombay a week or so prior to Christmas—the actual season for that country—and great business was anticipated.



Then came the cable indicating Calcutta, instead of Bombay, as the port of disembarkation. This cable the agent took to the directors of the theatre and pressed for a release from the agreement he had entered into as the representative of the circus. The directors were obdurate at this interview, but a day or two later they yielded, on condition that the circus was brought direct to Bombay on the conclusion of its eight weeks' stay in Calcutta. The directors pointed out that the season would be too far advanced for a later visit, and our agent accepted the condition they imposed.

On getting by train to Calcutta to prepare for the arrival of the circus, our agent again experienced difficulty in regard to a stance. As in Bombay, only two circuses a year were allowed in Calcutta, and as two were at that very moment located in the Maidan—a very nice ground set apart for amusement purposes—he had once more to seek a way out in getting the show into a big theatre—another very fine building, although not nearly so elaborate as the theatre in Bombay. In this our agent succeeded. A suitable contract was concluded, and on the arrival of the steamer, after a very pleasant voyage, with the Royal Italian Circus on board, the performances were soon offered to the public.

The show drew enormous crowds during its run of nine weeks, and would have remained longer had not the directors of the Bombay Theatre clamoured for the fulfilment of their contract. The unexpected arrival of the Royal Italian Circus in Calcutta was a disastrous happening from the point of view of the two British

circuses already there. It was with great regret I learned that our advent had practically closed up the businesses of our own people, but, even if he had known of their presence, my son had no choice in the matter. He simply had to go where the steamer carried him.

Now, from Calcutta to Bombay is a journey by rail of over 1,600 miles, and a special train had to be arranged to undertake it for us. This train was one of the longest ever seen in India. The journey occupied over three and a half days and cost a small fortune, but everything was got through safely, and business in Bombay was very good, though, due to the lateness of the season, not quite so enormous as in Calcutta.

During the seven weeks the circus spent in Bombay the heat was terrific, and the *personnel*, many of whom were laid up by it, were delighted when a move was made to Madras, where the show was exhibited for one week. Here also the heat proved too much for our people, and the cooler climate of Penang, in the Straits Settlements, where the next halt was made, was very welcome to them. From Penang, where business was quite satisfactory, the circus journeyed through Java, Borneo, Sumatra, Batavia, Siam, parts of China (including French China), and the Philippine Islands. Nine months were spent in Japan, and during its stay in Tokio the circus was patronised by the Emperor of Japan and his seven sons.

During this tour of the Far East my son made Singapore his headquarters for four years. When the Great War came to a close, my wife, since we had lost

two of our boys during the upheaval, was naturally very anxious for the return of the youngest lad, who had been away from home so long. With or without circus she wanted him home at once. Here, however, another difficulty presented itself. None of the boats was allowed to carry the circus, and it was not until July, 1922, that Douglas's reunion with the family took place; and another year had elapsed before the circus had returned to this country.

From what I have written, I think it will be realised that the Royal Italian Circus had a most wonderful tour, and one, I should say, unequalled by any other circus in the world.

## CHAPTER XXII

*Truth Stranger than Fiction—Frank C. Bostock's Lion-hunt in a Birmingham Sewer—His Exciting Experiences in France—Trouble over his German Band—Fifty Performers without Passports—Germans Arrested and Escorted to Frontier—Boycott of my Brother's Business—Forced Marches to Calais—My Brother has to Clear Out on Account of Public's Hostility—The Escape of a Tiger and its Attack on Two Horses—My Brother's Foolhardy Stunt with Wild Wallace in Hippodrome, Paris.*

**T**HAT truth is stranger than fiction was strongly exemplified in the career of my younger brother, F. C. Bostock, now deceased, whose remarkable experience with a lion in Birmingham was described by himself in an article in the *Wide World Magazine* of September, 1908. From my own knowledge I could describe this exciting episode, but I prefer to reproduce in full the article in the *Wide World Magazine*, for which I have the kind permission of the publishers, George Newnes, Ltd., as this course leaves no doubt as to the authenticity of the incident described. The article reads as follows :

No one can handle wild beasts for any length of time without encountering a few exciting moments.

During the twenty-five years that I have been closely associated with wild beasts I have met with several adventures, but the one that is most indelibly stamped on my memory occurred some nineteen years ago, when a full-grown African lion escaped into the sewers of the City of Birmingham. I have often felt I should like to explain fully to the public the true facts

of that strange hunt for the monarch of the forest in the dark, subterranean labyrinth of the Birmingham sewers, but have always hesitated because of the trick I played. I made the public believe that I had captured the lion when I had not, and having once deceived them, I was virtually forced to keep the deception up, with the result that to-day not twenty persons are aware how a few trusty companions and myself, accompanied by a boarhound, descended into the sewers at two o'clock in the morning, and, after immense difficulty and at no little risk, secured the runaway, who had remained down there for nearly three whole days. Although I threw dust in the eyes of the public at the time, I think *Wide World* readers, after a perusal of this narrative, will agree that I acted for the best, and will appreciate to some extent the difficult position in which I found myself at the time.

It was on Thursday, September 26th, 1889, that the incident I am about to relate occurred. At that time I was only twenty-one years of age, and held the somewhat responsible post of manager of Wombwell's Menagerie, of which my mother was proprietress. We visited every fair of any importance in the country, and were well known on the road. One of the principal fairs in those days was the old Onion Fair, held at Birmingham, or, to speak more accurately, at Aston, a suburb of the city. It lasted three days—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Very early on the morning of Thursday, the day that the fair opened, we were on the ground, with a host of other showmen, as busy as bees getting everything in readiness for the midday opening. The weather was everything that could be desired, and we looked forward to a good time. The animals were in the best of health, and I do not think I ever saw a menagerie under canvas look better and more spick-and-span than ours did on this eventful day.



Just before the show opened it was decided that one of the lions had better be removed from a cage on the right-hand side of the collection to one of the left. This particular animal was a remarkably fine specimen—well formed, well grown, with a handsome head and shoulders, covered with a fine darkish mane. He had been much admired, having been referred to by several naturalists as a typical “king of beasts,” with his haughty mien and dignified bearing.

As soon as orders had been given for his removal the shifting-dens used for this purpose were brought into action and placed up against the door of the travelling waggon in which the animal was then housed. In a few minutes we had him securely boxed in the shifting-den and carried across to the waggon on the side where it had been decided to exhibit him. The cages were placed back to back and the doors opened, but for some reason the lion refused to move from the shifting-den. Try as we might, he would not budge from his cramped quarters.

Suddenly, just as we were wondering what to do, he gave one wild bound, landing right into the waggon. The force of the great brute’s jump caused the vehicles to move slowly away from one another on their wheels. One of the men—unfortunately, a new hand who did not understand how the doors operated—dashed forward to close the opening, but before he could do so the lion had seen his opportunity. In an instant he leaped over the startled attendant’s head and was loose in the menagerie!

Realising at once that I was responsible for any mischief he might do, I dashed over to where some camels were quartered, determined to protect them should the lion attack them, for it is such creatures as these that all carnivorous animals at once make for in their wild state. The lion did exactly as I anticipated he would, rushing in great leaps and bounds to the





MY BROTHER, F. C. BOSTOCK, KNOWN AS "THE ANIMAL KING."

[To face p. 230.]



very spot where I stood. I happened to have a sweeping-broom in my hand at the time, which I immediately uplifted, and as the animal came towards me I dealt him a sharp blow across the face, which, in a measure, partially stunned him. He drew back at once, and after giving vent to a terrific roar, which frightened the animals generally, immediately started off in the direction of the elephant-waggon, which was at the other end of the tent.

Here I should explain that in the case of the ordinary waggons in which animals are housed it is usual during their exhibition to lower the shutters, which then touch the ground. Such waggons, drawn up in a close circle with their shutters lowered, offer no avenue of escape to any animal that may get loose within their radius.

Elephant-waggons, however, are built somewhat differently, the centre portion being so designed that there is an opening of about 3 feet in width between it and the ground. The lion had evidently espied this gap and made towards it, and a moment later he was out of the tent in the open fair grounds, where, for the time being, he was as free and untrammelled—and as much at liberty to get into mischief—as in his native wilds.

Without a moment's hesitation, realising the seriousness of the situation, I gave chase, accompanied by several of my men. Unfortunately, there were hundreds of people about, and their terrified shouts and wild rushes for safety naturally excited the animal and hindered us in our efforts to recapture him.

Meanwhile the lion quickly cleared the fair grounds, and was soon dashing away down the Aston Road. Crowds of people, on their way to the fair, thronged the road, and the majority of them certainly looked scared, but the animal darted by them without stopping. As I hurried after him I felt very nervous,

expecting every moment that he would leap upon somebody, but I did not dare to use my revolver for fear of hitting the passers-by.

I soon saw that the lion was making towards Aston Brook, a small stream or gully, into which the sewers of the city flowed. He reached it without accident, with my party hard on his heels, and here an extraordinary thing happened. An intrepid young man, who stood on the margin of the brook, made a wild snatch at the lion's tail as he darted by. He was not able to maintain his grip, however, and the only result of his interference was that the would-be captor of the king of beasts toppled headlong into the brook. The foolhardy fellow had a very narrow escape, for, had the enraged animal turned upon him he would not have had time to seek safety in flight.

At this moment, as luck would have it, we lost sight of the lion, although a reverberating roar told us that he was somewhere close at hand. When, almost breathless, we reached the brook, we were informed by the excited crowd which had collected, that the animal had jumped into the brook, and, after growling loudly, had disappeared down one of the sewer openings. There is no doubt that the poor brute had got badly frightened by his first taste of liberty, for, in addition to the hundreds of shouting people all round, scores of dogs had been put on his track and barked and snapped at his heels.

While we stood there discussing the situation, rather at a loss what to do, the crowd increased momentarily, and in about twenty minutes there were so many people round us that it seemed to me nearly every man, woman, and child in Birmingham must know what had happened. The greatest consternation prevailed everywhere, the people's fears being intensified by the fact that as the lion made his way along the sewers he stopped at every manhole he came to, and

sent up a succession of deep-chested roars that echoed and reverberated in the confined space until the very earth seemed to be full of weird sounds, driving some of the people nearly wild with terror.

I was at my wits' end what to do ; I was only a youngster, and the sense of my responsibility weighed upon me heavily. There was the risk of the lion escaping from the sewer at any moment and killing someone ; while there was also the danger that there would be a serious riot among the crowd. It was obvious that something must be done to allay their fears—and that quickly, for the people were beginning to flock towards the menagerie in thousands, apparently in a very ugly temper.

Placing two men at the opening where the animal had disappeared, with instructions to shoot him if he showed himself, I hastened back to the tent and held a consultation with my staff. The more I pondered over the matter the more I realised that the capture of the fugitive—who was undoubtedly in a most excited state—was practically an impossible task. From inquiries I had made, too, I learned that the sewers extended for many miles ; and every now and then breathless people came rushing to tell us that the animal had been seen at this manhole and that.

While we were discussing what was best to do one of my men came in to inform me that there were at least a hundred thousand people in and about the fair grounds, the majority of them greatly excited, and that unless something was done speedily there would be trouble. This decided me. Calling three men whom I knew I could trust, I told them to place a certain lion, a very quiet animal, into a shifting-den, drive him to the very back of the cage behind a movable partition, and then to cover the whole over with a piece of canvas. This was hastily done, and, after giving the men their instructions, they departed



with the cage on a light waggon, followed by a huge crowd. They made their way to the brook, and there placed the cage in front of the sewer opening.

Meanwhile one of our lion-tamers, a man named Marcus Orenzo, as daring an individual as one would meet in a day's march, made preparations for entering the sewer. He armed himself with a revolver, a number of crackers and Roman candles, a frying pan and a thick stick. With this odd assortment of weapons he and his assistant were lowered into a man-hole several streets away from where the cage containing the hidden lion had been placed. Orenzo also took with him a large boarhound called Marco. The dog was one of our trained animals, and I knew that if the lion attacked the man the boarhound could be relied upon to defend him as long as breath remained in his body.

The tamer's instructions were to make his way along from one manhole to another, and as he did so to make as much noise as possible. In accordance with this programme he fired his revolver, Marco growled viciously, the crackers were let off, and the Roman candles sputtered. After this had been going on for some time we suddenly heard two distinct revolver-shots. This was the signal. The men in charge of the shifting-den touched the spring, and instantly there was a sharp click. The partition fell in, the canvas was removed and there stood a lion. In a moment a shout went up from the vastly-relieved crowd. "They've got him! They've got him! They've got the lion!"

The cage containing the animal was then driven quickly towards the menagerie with myself and the attendants seated on top, followed by a cheering crowd. When we finally reached the front of the exhibition some of the men in the crowd rushed forward and carried the intrepid lion-tamer who had ventured



down into the sewer shoulder-high into the menagerie, while the cage containing the bogus fugitive was restored to its original place in the tent. Over forty thousand people filed into the show that afternoon, and they kept coming until we were positively obliged to refuse admission to any more. Everybody wanted to see "the lion that had escaped into the sewer," so we had to placard the cage with a notice stating that the animal seen in it was the one which had escaped and been recaptured.

Meanwhile, although money was pouring in, I was in a very unhappy frame of mind ; for, although our deception had met with more success than I had ever dared to hope, I knew perfectly well that the actual escaped lion was still at large somewhere in that labyrinth of sewers, and likely to break out and kill or injure someone at any moment. In that case, divining the trick that had been played upon them, I trembled to think what the people might do. The fears of the inhabitants had been allayed for the time being, and in all probability a serious riot averted—but the fact remained that the lion was still in the sewer. After racking my brain in vain for a solution of the difficulty, I finally sent two men, after swearing them to secrecy, to the hole where the lion had disappeared. They were armed with revolvers, and were instructed to shoot the brute, the instant he showed himself. I arranged for these sentries to be relieved periodically, so that the opening should be constantly guarded.

When the menagerie was closed for the night—after doing record business—I secretly visited every manhole in the city, but not a sound did I hear. I then wended my way back to the tent and went to bed, but sleep was out of the question, and I spent a most miserable night, wondering what was to be done. My difficulty, of course, was how to get the lion up without anyone knowing anything about it, and I was

still working out plans in my mind when the show opened again. It was soon crowded, and I must admit that we had a most successful day. Everybody in Birmingham, I should imagine, came to see "the lion that had been down in the sewer."

Things continued in this unsatisfactory condition until about five o'clock on the Saturday afternoon, when the Chief Constable strolled into the menagerie. I knew him well by sight, and had often spoken to him. He gazed for some minutes at the bogus "escaped" lion, and then came into my office and began to compliment me on my courage and pluck in recapturing the beast. This made me feel worse than before, and I determined to make a clean breast of the whole affair and ask his aid in my efforts to recapture the animal.

For some time he could not believe that the lion had not been caught, but when he realised that I was in deadly earnest, and that a trick had been played upon the public, his face was a study for any mind-readers. At first he was inclined to blame me, but when I showed him I had probably averted a panic, and that my own liabilities in the matter were pretty grave possibilities to face, he began to sympathise with me, adding that any help he could give was at my disposal.

I then took him to the opening where the animal had disappeared and pointed out the two armed men I had placed at the spot, which had never been left unguarded for a single moment. We then discussed how we should get the lion out of the sewer. It was highly desirable that the animal should be got up secretly without the citizens knowing anything about it, and we finally agreed to make the venture at two o'clock on Sunday morning. The menagerie would be closed as usual on Saturday night, and everybody would go off to their lodgings. Then, at two o'clock in the morning, the men selected for the work were to

quietly reassemble at the tent again, and in addition the Chief Constable promised to send a number of policemen and also some of the sewer-men.

I should imagine that at least two hundred men turned up, armed with a most miscellaneous collection of weapons. Some carried pistols, while others had guns, rifles, great crow-bars, clubs, and even large carving-knives. Every one of the party was sworn to strict secrecy. Among so many, and with so much ammunition, the danger was reduced to a minimum—unless some of them shot one another—provided always that the lion did not get one man at a time cornered in some narrow place.

At the appointed time we started off, the policemen and sewer-men being stationed at every manhole within a radius of a mile. The shifting-cage was brought and placed at the mouth of the sewer, the other end of which had been blocked up, so that the lion's only means of exit was the open door of the cage. Then three trusty men and myself, accompanied by the boarhound Marco, lowered ourselves into one of the manholes. Crawling on our hands and knees, and not knowing at any moment when we should come upon the fugitive, we moved slowly forward in the darkness and slime.

Presently, with a suddenness that made us all jump, Marco gave a sharp bark, followed by a curious throaty growl, and I realised that the dog had found the scent and was giving warning of the lion's whereabouts. It was a nerve-trying business, creeping slowly forward in those clammy vaults, but it had to be done, and soon, as we moved cautiously along, I saw two gleaming, greenish-red eyes in the darkness ahead, and knew we were face to face with the lion at last.

I at once sent one of the men back to shout the location of the runaway to the others. A number of

men, principally trainers, at once lowered themselves into other manholes, which meant that we now had the animal virtually surrounded, and all we had to do was to drive him back towards the hole where he had entered the drains.

Before proceeding farther, I gave instructions that ropes were to be lowered in the intervening manholes, for the purpose which will be understood later on. Dropping on all fours, blowing horns, firing off blank cartridges and Roman candles—which spat and fizzed in a most uncanny manner in the confined space of that underground tunnel—we went cautiously forward, hoping to drive the lion back to his cage, only two streets away.

At this juncture, however, Marco got too near the lion, and a terrific fight took place between the two animals. It is needless to say that under these circumstances the danger to all parties became extremely great. It was not until the boarhound had been severely slashed and torn by the lion, and his head badly bitten in several places that he left his savage antagonist and came to me with a whimper for protection. He had held on until he was at his last gasp, and had retired only just in time for us to save his life. I sent him back by one of the men to be taken care of, and then went on with the fight myself.

Taking off my big jack-boots I put them on my hands and arms, and then approached to within a distance of some 18 feet of the infuriated animal. He gave an ominous growl, but did not budge an inch.

The strain was getting almost unendurable. There was I on my knees in a filthy sewer facing a savage lion, whilst lying almost alongside but slightly behind me was my assistant. If the brute only plucked up enough courage to attack us, we were both dead men, and the thought did not add to one's peace of mind. Inch by inch I moved nearer the lion, which remained



motionless, until I could feel his hot breath on my face.

Fearing that he might split my skull open like an eggshell with a blow of one of his huge paws, I told my man to place over my head the large iron pail which we had used to carry our cartridges and other impedimenta in the sewer. Then I gave a sudden lurch forward, and as I did so brought one of the heavy jack-boots right across his nose. Still he refused to move. Then, just as I was wondering what to do next, the pail on my head tipped, rolled off, and went crashing down the sewer, making a racket which echoed throughout the whole length of the narrow tunnel in the most extraordinary manner.

The lion, which had doggedly refused to move for all our other manœuvres, at once turned tail and disappeared, just as if the earth had suddenly swallowed him up. He simply slid away from view. We wondered where he had gone to, and at once began to move forward. We discovered that there was an 8-foot fall close behind him, and this was evidently his reason for being so reluctant to turn back until frightened by the pail. We did not know of the existence of the fall until we reached it, and consequently tumbled headlong over it, though luckily without hurting ourselves. The lion was now roaring terrifically somewhere ahead, and, following up at our best pace, we soon found out the cause of his trouble. In the act of leaping another fall he had caught hind legs and quarters in one of the slip-nooses which had been dropped down from a manhole just above, and was suspended helplessly, head downwards. Other ropes were immediately let down, for he would soon have died in that position, and we were fortunate enough to secure his head and fore-paws without injury to ourselves. In obedience to orders the cage was then placed over the manhole,



and when we had run the ropes through it and out over the pavement the men began to haul; and in this most undignified fashion the king of beasts was dragged out of his prison and finally landed safely in his cage.

When we got the poor beast back into the menagerie I at once realised that he was in a terrible state. He had been in the sewer for nearly three days and nights; was wet, cold, and covered with filth; and during the whole time he had had nothing to eat or drink, unless he had partaken of the dirty sewer water. We gave him a good bed of dry straw to lie upon and clean himself with, and generally did our best for him. Next morning we moved on to Burton-on-Trent, but it was clear that the animal was in a precarious condition; he was breathing very hard, which all trainers know is a bad sign. Arriving at Burton, he was too ill to be exhibited, and in a few weeks he died, after wasting away almost to nothing. At Burton, as at Aston, thousands of people came to the menagerie to see the lion that escaped into the Birmingham sewers, and they, of course, were shown the "bogus" one. Indeed, this lion was the feature of the show for nearly a year, and was the biggest draw in the whole menagerie.

Naturally, the news leaked out before long in Birmingham that in the early hours of Sunday morning we had taken a second lion out of the sewer, but one of my men explained that it was an animal which had escaped for an hour or so during the night, so that the good people of Birmingham did not discover the deception I practised upon them—a deception which was, I think, really unavoidable under the circumstances.

Incorporated in the article is a facsimile of a memo. from E. F. Spicer, F.Z.S., & Sons, Taxidermists and

Naturalists, Birmingham, who corroborated my brother's story by writing as follows :

DEAR SIR,—

In reply to your letter, I remember the escape and capture of Bostock's lion quite well. The lion got into the sewer. There was a bogus catch conducted by Mr. Bostock, but the animal was not caught for at least three days afterwards. Mr. Bostock was prepared to shoot the animal if he saw trouble, and I was on the spot prepared to offer a good price for the carcase.

Yours, etc.,

E. F. SPICER, F.Z.S.

Let me add, before proceeding to a further adventure by my younger brother, F. C. Bostock, that I can also provide confirmation of his Birmingham exploit. I was not in Birmingham on the day the lion made its escape, but I appeared on the scene the following day (Friday) and heard from my brother of what had taken place. I then advised and assisted him to the best of my ability, and when the lion was actually caught, it was I who superintended the extrication of the lion from the sewer by means of ropes, his lodgment in the travelling-box, and his return to his own cage in the waggon, my brother and those who were with him in the sewer being so bedraggled and tired that they were unable to attend to these details. I can assure my readers that I was mightily relieved when my brother and those who assisted him emerged unscratched from the sewer. It was a most thrilling adventure for them.

Another very exciting experience fell to the lot of

my younger brother, F. C. Boſtock, in 1902. At that time he was touring France with a very good menagerie and circus under the name of Boſtock, Wombwell & Bailey. In the larger towns he did pretty well, but the smaller places did not juſtify the expense of a visit from ſo big a ſhow. Againſt the advice of friends, including myſelf, my brother had taken a ſplendid German band of fourteen performers with him to France. All went well until the ſhow was working towards the ſouth of France, where my brother intended to winter. At a place named Clermont Ferrand the trouble I and my brother's other counſellors had feared duly materialiſed. This incident almoſt led to a riot and entailed my brother in a loſs of thouſands of pounds.

During the early part of the evening performance of the circus two youths of about ſixteen or ſeventeen, who had crawled under the circus tent and were making their way underneath the ſeating, were detected by one of the ſtaff, who, while ſome yards away, ſhouted and then ran towards them. In their eagereſs to get out, and handicapped by the darkneſs, one of the youths ran his forehead againſt the ragged end of one of the iron ſtokes uſed on the wallings or outside of the tent and ſuſtained a naſty wound, from which blood flowed profuſely. As a reſult of the youth's cries a crowd quickly collected, whereupon the young ſcoundrel complained that he had been ſtruck and injured by one of the employees. This allegation the other delinquent promptly corroborated, and, of courſe, the fat was in the fire. Police and gendarmes were quickly on the ſcene, and with the crowd around

them growing bigger and bigger, matters assumed a distinctly ugly aspect. The people inside enjoying the circus performance were ignorant of the development outside, and my brother believed that it was the presence of their own townspeople within that prevented the crowd outside from wrecking the tent.

The police and gendarmes were assured that the boy's injury had been caused by himself, but he and his companion repeated the allegation that it had been inflicted by one of the circus employees. The crowd, of course, believed the boys, and so did the Chief of Police, who, waxing exceedingly nasty, demanded the production of all papers (passports) before anyone left the place. To ensure that this would be done, he placed a cordon of police round the establishment before the performance had finished, and, as luck would have it, more than fifty of my brother's 100 employees were without passports. Among them were the German band and several other German artistes, who were promptly arrested and taken with all their belongings to the local police office. The following day they were escorted to the frontier and returned to their own country, while my brother was called upon to deposit a certain sum of money with the police in case anything went wrong with the injured boy.

My brother's worries did not end here. The French newspapers got hold of the story and grossly distorted it. The boy's injuries were greatly exaggerated, while attention was drawn to the menace presented by the number of aliens employed in this show. The presence of so many Germans, quoth the writers, was

beyond comprehension, and the police deserved great praise for ridding France of this lot. Patriots were advised to refrain from patronising a circus or menagerie the director of which would insult them by having so many of their greatest enemies in his show, etc., etc.

The newspapers had merely anticipated the public attitude towards my brother's business. A boycott of his circus and menagerie was applied at once, while it was only with great difficulty his employees were able to buy food for themselves and for the live-stock. The route southward from Clermont Ferrand, which had been advertised for almost three weeks ahead, was immediately cancelled, and the show turned about and moved northwards towards home. Without previous advertising, the new route was a failure, and my brother found his business was crippled. In the circumstances he closed the circus, discharged all his artistes, and set out to get the menagerie to Calais for shipment to Dover as soon as possible by forced marches. This retreat took place at the end of October, and with the long journeys in pretty severe weather the horses were soon knocked up, and if my brother had not slowed down he would have had no horses left.

As a result of the publicity given to the incidents at Clermont Ferrand, the people everywhere were hostile to the menagerie staff, but it was for Monsieur the Director they had their bitterest hatred. My brother was a striking personality and easily recognised, and the situation became so intolerable for him that he cleared out to London, leaving his foreman to bring



the menagerie to Calais and thence to Dover, which was reached just before Christmas.

My own menagerie was at this time in the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, fulfilling my yearly seven weeks' engagement there, and when I heard of the condition of my brother's horses I sent him thirty of mine, as they were not required by me at the time, to assist in bringing his menagerie to London. There my brother opened in the Old Kent Road, and during the five weeks he spent there did very well, so that his troubles were over for a little.

Mention of troubles, however, reminds me that about two weeks after my brother had left his menagerie when it was making for Calais a most exciting incident occurred.

Early one morning, as the menagerie was leaving a town, a waggon containing a full-grown tiger and some other animals, whilst going up a hill, ran back over the block, was capsized and badly damaged. Despite the fact that they had got a severe shaking, the animals, being of the cat tribe, escaped uninjured, while the members of the staff immediately concerned were also in luck in this respect. The waggon was lifted on to its wheels with a bit of a struggle, and the journey resumed. About ten more miles had been covered when the driver was horrified to find that one of his passengers, the tiger, was loose upon the road. The fugitive ran past him and also sped past an old woman who was going to market about 3 kilometres distant. Then it sprang to the neck of a white horse, one of a pair which was pulling a waggon three waggons ahead of the one from which it had made

its escape. The tiger pulled the horse to the ground, and this in its downfall knocked the legs from under its companion, with the result that both horses were to be seen struggling amongst the shafts. The tiger was still clinging to the neck of the white horse and was tearing its shoulders with his claws.

The menagerie train was happily not widely spread out, and it was quickly halted when the alarm was raised. With the exception of a few men who remained to look after the horses (the animals were so done up that they required but little supervision), the entire staff concentrated at the scene of the tiger's attack. Among them, fortunately, was an Edinburgh man who was an expert lassooist, rejoicing in the nickname of Mustang Ned. He made a noose in a rope he procured from the top of one of the waggon, and at the first throw he got the noose over the tiger's head. The rope was then passed between the spokes of one of the waggon wheels, and a number of men applied their strength to it to dislodge the tiger from the stricken horse. The tiger was nearly choked by the rope before he released his hold on his prey. Once the tiger had been drawn up to the waggon wheel other ropes were brought into use to fasten his feet. This done, the rope round the tiger's neck was slackened to avoid choking him. This was accomplished none too soon, for the tiger was by this time in a pretty bad way.

Which waggon to put the tiger in, and how to get him there, was the next problem that required to be solved. By doubling up some of the other animals, an empty cage was obtained. The waggon with this

was pulled alongside the tiger while several men mounted to the roof. With a rope fastened round his body they pulled the tiger up until he was level with the door of the cage. Several of the staff on the ground then pushed him through the doorway with a shutter belonging to this waggon, and immediately the door was pulled to by means of a rope which had been fixed for the purpose. When the door had been secured the ropes fastened to the tiger's feet and body were cut from the outside, and everybody was pleased to observe that the tiger, except that he was fatigued, was none the worse for his rather rough usage.

As for the white horse, he was so badly injured that he had to be destroyed on the spot, his flesh serving as food for the carnivores, including the tiger who had brought about his destruction. The other horse who had been knocked down in the *mêlée* was able to rise only with great difficulty and with assistance, and he was never worked again.

How did the tiger make his escape? I have mentioned that the waggon in which he was a passenger was capsized. As a result it was badly twisted, and it appears that the floor had been slackened. The likelihood is that a hole was also made in the floor through its coming in contact with a part of the undercarriage, and by enlarging the aperture the tiger was able to effect his escape. That the driver did not hear the tiger tearing up the floor was due to the fact that the animal's cage was at the rear end of the waggon and the rumble of the vehicle on the move.

As the menagerie approached the little town in which it was to be exhibited that night it was met by a

posse of police, accompanied by a goodly crowd of civilians, all of whom were equipped with firearms. It transpired that the old woman past whom the tiger bounded just after making its escape had hurried into the town and spread the alarming news that a wild animal had broken loose from a travelling menagerie, and, apprehensive that it might still be at large, the police and the others were on the way to effect its destruction. Of this incident, which was never chronicled in the French Press, neither my brother, F. C. Bostock, nor I was an eye-witness, as we were both in England at the time, but my account of it is correct in every detail. In my employment at present I have one of the men who saw the affair, while the foreman of my brother's menagerie at that time is to-day in a very responsible position in Blackpool.

Having read of my brother's troubles in France, my readers would no doubt have concluded that he asked for these by having so many Germans in his employment without passports. I quite agree, but to those who have not travelled on the Continent let me say that it is very, very easy for anyone in business to get into, and very difficult to get out of, trouble in Continental towns and villages. During the Boer War, I recollect, the British were not at all popular in France. I had a menagerie—my No. 2, or Bostock & Wombwell's Continental Menagerie—over there, and we experienced a very unpleasant time. "*Vive les Boers—à bas les Anglais!*" the people shrieked at us everywhere we went. This created a very uncomfortable position for us, and also affected business to such an extent that something had to be done to

meet the situation. We accordingly altered our title to *La Grande Menagerie Americaine*, and, making a long journey, got beyond the region where we were known as British. The new legend ensured us of a pleasanter welcome on the road and business greatly improved.

Another most exciting experience that fell to my brother, Frank C. Bostock, occurred at the Hippodrome, Paris, one of the largest places of amusement in Europe. I think it was in 1905 he had a lion which, by reason of its ferocity, had made a great name for itself the previous season at the Hippodrome. It was known as Wild Wallace, and had not been introduced in the arena for many months. My brother was giving a benefit for one of his trainers, Bonnavita, who had been incapacitated on the previous visit to Paris, and, in order to stir up interest, he had advertised that on this occasion he would enter the cage with the notorious lion. It was a foolhardy thing to do, but my brother was rather given to sensational stunts. He wrote informing me of his intention, and I remonstrated with him, and advised him that, if he must do this foolish thing, he should not think of having the lion in the big arena he had there, which was 50 feet in diameter, but should have a cage about 18 feet by 8 feet, with bars widely apart all round, built inside the big arena.

My brother replied that he had announced that he would do this thing and he must go on with it, but he acquiesced in my suggestion in regard to the cage. He invited me to come over for the occasion, and I went. The huge place was packed. There must have been at least 7,000 people present. When the



rest of the performance had been gone through in the big arena and the staff had quickly erected the smaller cage inside the bigger one, the ferocious Wallace was introduced. As soon as my brother made his appearance the applause was deafening, but as he approached the smaller cage Wallace made one bound towards him, almost knocking the cage over in his rush.

It was evident that things were going to be very lively, and I wished that I had remained on the other side of the Channel rather than be an eye-witness of, and an actual participant in, this foolhardy stunt. But I was there, and so were my brother and the lion, and he had promised to enter the cage. Unless he did so in the face of that multitude of people his title of "Animal King" was gone for ever. He approached the cage again, when the lion once more sprang at the door. It appeared as if some other method would have to be devised if he was to get into the cage at all. My brother accordingly called two of his attendants and asked them to try to attract the lion's attention to the other end of the cage furthest from the door, so that he could slip in. After two or three attempts he got inside, but the lion was on top of him almost instantaneously, and then ensued a terrible struggle 'twixt man and beast.

My brother was bitten in the back and struck and wounded on the left shoulder and arm, but he regained his feet and, as he was at one end of the cage and the lion at the other, he reversed matters and actually assumed the aggressive. Twice he drove the lion round the cage, the beast meanwhile snapping, snarling and striking with his paws and only missing him by a

few inches each time. He then made a quick exit from the cage, but this time Wild Wallace was so maddened that he dashed after him with such rage and speed that he knocked the door out of my brother's hand and lunged into the big arena and flew past my brother, who seized a wooden chair used for training purposes and also for the lions to take up their positions on, and utilised this as a shield.

Holding this chair up before him, he adopted the aggressive again, and approached the lion, who seized one of the legs of the chair and bit it off. However, my brother drove the animal around the big arena three times, the lion facing and fighting him all the while. Meanwhile the audience, who were extremely excited, were shouting, "*Assez, assez*," and other remarks. In fact, they appeared well-nigh mad. On the third time round my brother had signalled the attendants to open the back door leading to the passage where the animal sleeping dens were situated, and Wild Wallace at once entered this, followed by my brother. Wallace did not stop to fight. He made up the passage for his proper cage as quickly as he could, and immediately he entered it the door was closed behind him.

My brother then collapsed in the passage and could not return to receive the plaudits of the crowd. He was carried to his living quarters in the Hippodrome buildings, where he had to remain for several weeks. After this, he never appeared before the public as an animal trainer again. In fact, he had really retired from the arena two years previously and had only consented to this foolish act of daring in order to secure a record house at increased prices for his

injured trainer, Bonnavita. No owner or manager of any wild animal exhibition—or, for that matter, anyone else—should seek for scenes such as I have described. It is far too serious a matter. When I saw my brother was not dangerously wounded, I was greatly relieved and returned to Glasgow the following day.

## CHAPTER XXIII

*My Success as a Lion Breeder—Orders I have Despatched Abroad—My First Deal in Lions—A Success that Fizzled Out—The Training of Lions—The Moods of Captive Animals—Fights to the Death—An Exciting Scene at the Scottish Zoo—Adventures with Snakes—A Bear Snaps off Part of my Thumb—Attacked by Monkeys.*

IN the course of my long run as a menagerie proprietor I have bred, reared, and trained many wild animals, but chiefly lions, with which I was very successful. My lions were splendid animals, being descendants of the original Wallace, a very noble beast, and were in demand all over Europe. I sold four fully-trained male lions in one group to Bidel, the world-renowned French menagerist, who was the outstanding trainer of his day. I also sent Bidel a trainer, Thos. Crouch, known later as Captain Ricardo, who remained with the Frenchman for several years.

I sold a mixed lion group—two males and two females—to Georges Marck, Paris. This group had been trained to give a splendid performance, and Captain Fred Wombwell, at that time just a stripling, went with the animals to complete the act. He remained with Marck for eight months, during which he performed at all the principal Paris fairs.

Other lions I sold to the Menagerie Pezon, the Menagerie Pianet and the Menagerie Juliano, all in France, but provided no trainer with the animals. A

group of four lions and also a single male lion I despatched to Harmston's Circus, Singapore, Straits Settlements, but unfortunately the latter died from an unknown cause within a week of its arrival, while within three months the group of four were suffocated whilst on a water journey. As a result of these untoward happenings I was called upon to duplicate this order. A trainer I had sent with the first consignment had been a great success, and he was to take in hand the group of partly-trained animals in the second consignment, but I learned later that he had not got on very well with the second lot of animals.

Other lions trained in my establishments were sold to the Tower, Blackpool; Bellevue Gardens, Manchester; the Edinburgh Zoo; Sedgwick's Menagerie; Hanneford's Circus; and my brother, F. C. Bostock, in America.

Writing of lions, I am reminded of my very first deal in these animals when my brother, J. W. Bostock, and I purchased from Cooke Bros. (John Henry and Alfred Eugene Cooke, circus proprietors, and who were then stationed in Manchester) a group of four lions—two males and two females—and a waggon with bars all round. This was in November, 1881, and they were added to my mother's menagerie, then on tour and for the time stanced at Ipswich, until we had trained them and decided what to do with them.

We had at that time a very able man, Tom Bridgeman by name, who was very anxious to try his hand at animal training. We allowed him to begin with this new group of lions, and of their training he made quite a success. In a very short time we offered the group and trainer, who was now known as Captain



Cardona, for engagements either in circus or in music-halls, and promptly fixed a contract for their appearance at the Folies Bergère, Paris, for three months at £50 per week and expenses. The engagement materialised through an agent, who was to receive 10 per cent. of the fee.

The act was such an enormous success that, after only two weeks' run, the Folies Bergère management exercised an option they had of prolonging the contract for another twelve weeks. Had our luck held out, I am just afraid that my brother and I, because of the money we had made, would have completely lost our heads. But alas! ere the sixth week of the original contract was completed, one of the male lions took ill and had to be separated from its companions. This greatly upset the performance, and we were paid *pro rata* for the three remaining animals. Less than three weeks later the second male took ill, and had to be taken out of the act. This burst our contract, as the management retained the two females by themselves only one week and paid us accordingly.

The two male lions ultimately succumbed. No one could ascertain the cause of their death, but I am quite certain their trouble was glanders contracted through eating infected meat, as I have seen several cases of this malady since. At that time the entire Continent (especially France) was reeking with this trouble, so the infection of our two males was not to be wondered at. The two females, who escaped the disease, were brought back to this country, and, after a period of isolation, were restored to my mother's menagerie.

As a result of the success of this act at the Folies

Bergère, offers of contracts all over the Continent, at much enhanced fees, were being received by us, so the reader will see what a splendid investment we lost through the illness and death of the two male lions through no fault of our own, which once more illustrates the risk and uncertainty of all live-stock.

In regard to the training of lions, strange as it may appear, a trainer is often more in danger with a single lion, lioness, or other animal than with a group of carnivora, especially lions. This, I imagine, is due to the fact that the animal feels that it is, so to speak, at bay, whereas when there are several animals together they have not (except at pairing time) the same initiative, and so take little or no notice of the trainer. At all events, they are not so disposed to resent his advent amongst them.

I have also often heard it said that an elephant, camel, and indeed almost any animal in captivity, will not injure a man unless he has ill-used or tormented it. Even "Lord" George Sanger, in his book "Seventy Years a Showman," propounds this view. I must say that I do not agree. Male animals of almost any kind will at certain times attack their trainers or keepers without any provocation. They momentarily lose control of themselves and run amok.

At such times they are also very peculiar in their feeding. I have seen male camels when in season refuse the very best of hay or bran, while the others around him are devouring the food as fast as they can. I have seen a male camel maintain this mood for months, and yet if a man bearing a bundle of straw passed him he would seize and tear an enormous

mouthful of the straw and eat every blade of it. This, therefore, was the plan we adopted when a camel refused its food. The hay or bran which was meant for him he would not touch, but the hay or straw which was apparently not intended for him he seized and devoured.

Generally speaking, the prevalent conception of camels and dromedaries as patient, docile creatures is correct, but a wicked camel or dromedary is a very dangerous creature. His mode of attack is to seize the victim in his very powerful jaws, and, still retaining his grip, throw him up in the air; then, as he whirls the man to the ground, he brings his whole body forward and either kneels or gets the fore part of his chest on him; and he will crush the unfortunate fellow to death unless assistance is quickly afforded him. I have seen several instances of this.

(In passing, I should like to make another reference to "Lord" George Sanger's book. In this he says that Wombwell's Menagerie in the 'fifties wanted all its own way as regards stands, etc., and all else had to stand aside for it. This is hardly correct. Mr. George Sanger would at that period be in a very small way of business, and he was perhaps not aware that the late Mr. George Wombwell held a Royal Decree from King George IV., which gave him permission to erect and exhibit his menagerie in any market place in Great Britain for any consecutive three days free of cost.)

Fights to the death between animals in captivity occur occasionally, in which connection I recall the killing of a lioness by a magnificent lion called Cecil

at the Scottish Zoo. Cecil came to this country when he was but fifteen months old with Frank E. Willis's "Savage South Africa" Exhibition, which practically came to grief at the East End Exhibition Building, Glasgow. It was there I bought Cecil. He was forest-bred, and had by this time developed into a beautiful specimen.

We were not very successful in breeding with him, and had we apprehended the result of our efforts in this direction we should have desisted. It was on December 2nd, 1903, that Cecil suddenly attacked a handsome lioness who was sharing a den with him. Without any apparent reason he seized her by the throat, and the grimness of his aim was all too evident. Along with the keepers I tried every means that suggested itself to make the lion relax his grip. Forks and scrapers were brandished without avail, and even the contents of two fire-extinguishers discharged into Cecil's eyes failed to move him. Next the fire-hydrant, with a tremendous pressure, was played into his face; but still the lion held on, and when he finally did let go he was apparently satisfied that he had achieved his object. The majestic murderer then threw his lifeless mate from him, gave himself a shake, and withdrew satisfied.

The Hippodrome, in which a matinée performance was taking place, was separated from the Zoo by a very thin wall. It was packed on this occasion, and my principal concern was the danger of a panic among our patrons. Luckily, however, the noise of the grim scene in the lions' den did not reach them. Quite a large number of visitors were present in the Zoo but

they watched the ill-matched struggle with comparative calmness. The lioness's body I presented to the Glasgow Museum.

In 1888, I remember, we had a lion named Nero in the next compartment to a three-parts-grown tiger. During a journey by road Nero tore a hole in the partition. Through this he squeezed his head to seize the tiger, whom he dragged—impossible though this seemed—through the aperture into his own compartment.

The noise of the scuffle attracted the attention of the driver, who stopped his waggon and called for assistance, he being unable to leave his horses, which, alarmed by the noise in the den, were disposed to bolt. Handicapped as they were by lack of tools while on the journey, it was little those who rushed on the scene could do, and within a few minutes the tiger was dead. This represented a loss of £300.

As recently as June 19th, 1925, a similar scene occurred when my menagerie was stationed at Cardiff. A lion named Wallace burst through the partition between himself and a lioness, Juno, and killed her before any of the staff had time to frustrate his murderous intention. Lions undoubtedly are subject to these moments of uncontrollable passion, which even those who have spent their lifetime in handling them are unable to understand.

Away back in 1891, I recollect, I left the menagerie in Scotland to have a look at some animals which Cross, the Liverpool animal-dealer, had for sale. Whilst at his place I was invited to have a look at some very good snakes—Harlequin boas—that had just



arrived from South America. From ten to twelve snakes were accommodated in a box about 20 inches wide by 30 inches deep with a hinged lid. They certainly looked a nice lot, being full of colour and bloom; but the most particular point to be noted when purchasing snakes on their arrival in this country is the condition of their mouths. They frequently arrive with a disease of the gums called canker, for which a cure has not yet been found. Their gums are swollen and ulcerated, and buyers are out to avoid purchasing snakes with this malady, especially if they are to be placed amongst other snakes with a clean bill of health.

I was impressed by the appearance of the snakes Cross had for sale, and I decided to go further and ascertain whether or not they were free from canker. I opened the lid of the box for the purpose of a closer inspection and put my right hand inside to bring out a certain snake. The reptile, however, had anticipated my intention and darted at my hand. This I tried to withdraw, and at the same time tried to close the lid to prevent the escape of the other snakes; but the attacking snake was too quick for me, although I had been far from slow in my actions, and he darted forward and seized the thick part of the hand between the thumb and fore-finger, and in my successful effort to tear my hand away I brought with me nearly every tooth in the snake's mouth. They were embedded in my flesh. I seized the reptile's neck fast below its head with my left hand, and Mr. Cross himself helped me to return it to the box. Blood spurted from about thirty points in my hand, and up till then I

had never at any time seen so much blood flow from one bite.

I plunged my hand into a tub of cold water, which stemmed the flow of blood somewhat. When I took my hand out of the water I saw a number of snake's teeth sticking in the flesh, and these I extracted on the spot. Later I got the hand dressed and returned to Scotland the same night. I had very little trouble with the hand, my flesh, as it usually did when injured, healing up rapidly. But every now and then I felt another of the snake's teeth embedded in my hand and had to have it taken out.

My hand eventually healed up beautifully, and I had forgotten all about the snake's bite, when, five months after the incident at Cross's, as I was putting my hand into my pocket, I felt a sharp pricking sensation. I withdrew my hand quickly and examined it, but could find nothing to account for the pain I had felt. It struck me, however, that a snake's tooth was the cause of the trouble; but this was not visible to my eye and I did not trouble further about it. But the thing continued to trouble me at intervals, and it so happened that I experienced the sharp pricking sensation when Dr. Butter, of Cannock, a great friend of mine, was visiting me. After examination of my hand he lanced it at the spot (indicated by me, as nothing could be seen) where I had felt the pain, and, lo and behold! out came two snake's teeth which had been lodged in my hand for nearly eight months. Thereafter the hand gave me no more trouble.

Another exciting experience I had with a snake occurred as recently as June, 1922. My son, who had

been in the Straits Settlements for several years, sent me a lot of stock, including elephants, tigers, leopards, and three enormous snakes. Each of the last-mentioned arrived in a box about 4 feet square, in which they were coiled up like a rope. Their journey in this fashion had lasted over a month, and during it they had been without artificial heat. To all appearances they were torpid and cold, whereas the smaller snakes at Cross's establishment were kept in a very warm place and were as lively as it was possible for them to be.

It was whilst displaying these three reptiles to a Mr. Hagenbeck, who had come to London to see them, that I experienced a thrill. Mr. Hagenbeck requested to have a look at the mouth of one of the trio, and to oblige him I seized one of the snakes by the neck and pulled its head out of the box for his examination. While I was holding it by the neck the snake wriggled out and down the outside of the box and fastened itself on to my leg, and if prompt assistance for me had not been forthcoming my leg would have received "some" crush. The very fact that I was holding like grim death to his head to prevent him biting me provided him with a good leverage from his tail end, he being only about half out of the box.

Mr. Hagenbeck, observing this development, called for assistance, and ere long the rest of the snake was back in the box. The lid was quickly closed and the snake allowed to coil himself up at his leisure. Unless you have had an experience similar to this you can have no idea of the crushing power

of a snake. It is stupendous, and I can tell you I never want to feel one of its dimensions around me again.

At New Deer, Aberdeenshire, in 1891, we had to secure a black bear in order to treat an ingrowing thumb claw. This operation had to be performed every nine or ten months to prevent the claw growing into the pad of the foot, a development which would have caused the animal considerable pain.

It was an extremely difficult job to get a nooze over Bruin's foot, and on this occasion I am disposed to believe I was just a little too venturesome. At all events, he seized the end of my left thumb with his front teeth, just between his two canine ones, and I left about an inch of my thumb in his possession. He snapped it off just as simply as you would cut a piece of butter. As I had done when bitten by the snake at Liverpool, I plunged my hand into a bucket of cold water, after which I got it dressed. Except that I have difficulty in picking up a very small object with its aid, the injured thumb is not much different from its *vis-à-vis*.

To be attacked by monkeys, as I was at Sunderland in November, 1875, is not at all an enjoyable experience. While the entire staff, with the exception of myself, were away at dinner I discovered that several of the monkeys in what we call the large cage, which usually accommodates from eighteen to twenty-five animals, were attacking one of their number and seemed bent upon killing him. By intervention from the outside I managed to stop the unequal fight, but no sooner did I turn to go away than the attackers resumed their onslaught on the friendless monkey.

Unable to stand cruelty in any form, I procured steps and was soon in beside the monkeys. I beat off the attackers with my hands, and they deserted their quarry to transfer their attentions to me. One of the monkeys fastened his teeth in the top of my head; another obtained a grip on my thigh; a third sunk his teeth in my right hand, while the others, obviously resenting my intrusion, added to my discomfort in hovering around me.

With no assistance available I felt the position was quite a serious one for me, and realised that before I could think of getting out of the cage I must free myself from the monkeys, who were clinging tenaciously to me. Had I emerged with the three monkeys fastened on my body they would have had the freedom of Sunderland, and perhaps all the others with them. I decided to act as I thought best in the circumstances. The monkey fixed to my right hand I dashed against the bars of the cage. That put him out of action. With my right hand now freed I seized the fellow on the top of my head by the throat and hurled him from me. The monkey which had gripped me by the thigh did not wait to experience this ignominy. Having witnessed what had happened to his companions, he released his hold of his own accord and withdrew.

But my attackers, especially the two who had settled on my head and hand, had employed their teeth to firm purpose. I was bitten in many places, and from my head and hand there were copious streams of blood. Just as I was emerging from the cage the attendant responsible for the monkeys



arrived on the scene and, with assistance brought to hand in case it was required, he went into the cage, armed with a useful cane, and brought out the monkey which had been the object of the original attack. He was in a pretty bad way, and skilful and prolonged attention was required to save his life.

This incident revives the recollection of an affair that took place at the Scottish Zoo in 1924. Two of our keepers were on holiday, and one of our men, a native of County Donegal, named Mike, who had been with us for many years, was lending a hand in getting the place tidied up for the reception of patrons. Mike's principal job was at the front door, but he and the others were supposed to help at anything in the business. Mike was scraping out a cage containing two Thibet bears and two wolves. He was doing the work from the outside when one of his colleagues suggested that he could make a much better job of it if he went into the cage.

"Are they all right?" asked Mike, naturally anxious to know if such a course was safe, and on being reassured on this point by his adviser he went into the cage. Mike had made good progress with his work and everything went all right until one of the bears crept silently and slyly up behind him and, dealing him a blow on the legs with his paw, brought the Irishman to the floor with a crash. Not content with this the treacherous bear seized his victim by the scalp and almost tore the skin from it. Mike's distracted cries brought plenty of assistance to the scene. William Duncan, professionally known as Captain Rowley, rushed into the cage, drove off the

bear and brought out the injured man. Never in all my life have I seen any other human being bleed as did Mike on this occasion ; but his wound, a scalp one, appeared to be worse than it actually was. Dr. William Cullen, who had a surgery almost opposite the Zoo, was on the spot within a few minutes, placed the scalp back in position and bound up the head, and in a very short time Mike was quite all right again.

“Donegal Mike,” as we used to call him, was more fortunate than one of my old employees who was fatally injured by a hyæna when with my brother’s menagerie. This was the original “Sargano” (William Dellah). He was in a cage performing with two bears and two hyænas at Hednesford, Staffordshire, when, owing to the very slippery nature of the floor, he slipped and fell heavily on the back of his head. He was stunned, and as he lay prostrate one of the hyænas bit him on the head and the wound proved fatal.

It is but reasonable to expect that a staff working among so many animals will receive a few bites and scratches, which the men accept as part of the day’s darg, and fortunately fatal accidents, like the one I have described, are of very rare occurrence.

## CHAPTER XXIV

*Elephants and Horses Poisoned through Eating Irish Yew Tree Leaves—The End of Lizzie, the South African Elephant—A Difficult Operation—Three Camels Poisoned by Gas—Seven Road Horses Succumb to Mysterious Fumes—Outbreaks of Anthrax and Glanders—I Enlist the Services of Professor McCall, of Glasgow Veterinary College—Menagerie Held up Owing to Outbreak of Glanders—I Lose two Valuable Horses Loaned to a Contractor—A Worrying Incident Leads to my Illness—Sea Lion Swallows Rubber Ball and Survives—Some Amazing "Finds" in Stomachs of Animals and Birds.*

**D**URING my career I have had the misfortune to lose two very fine elephants as a result of poisoning. The first fatality occurred on September 24th, 1898, the victim being a magnificent Indian female named Abdellah. She was yoked to the band-carriage with a string of camels in front of her. We were preparing for a little parade, just going into Hanley, Staffs., and the cavalcade had been drawn into the side of the road to permit of its being properly formed. The band-carriage was drawn close to a vicarage wall, and Abdellah got her trunk over and pulled some leaves from an Irish yew tree. These she must have eaten, for almost immediately afterwards she was seized with violent pains, as if in colic, and within two hours was dead.

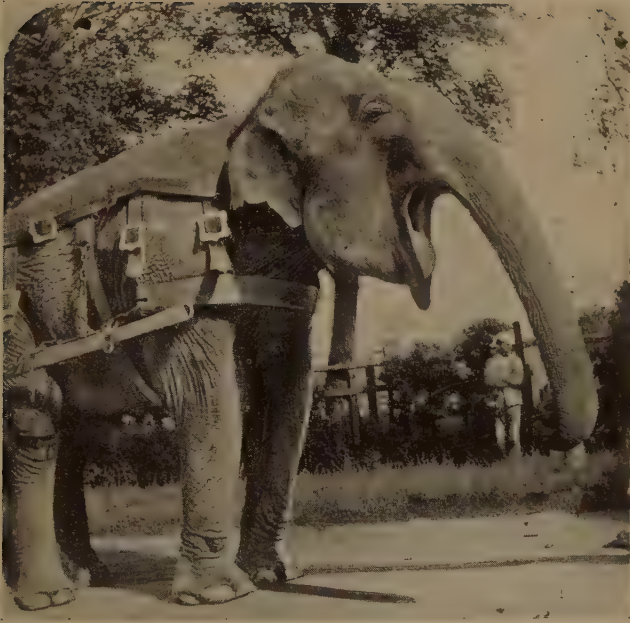
Abdellah was about forty years of age and had been with the menagerie for over thirty years. Her stuffed carcase, which is on exhibition in the Museum, Edinburgh, is one of the finest specimens in Britain. The

animal's death was a great loss to the menagerie. Abdellah holds a position alongside the finest stuffed African elephant it has been my lot to see—an adult male—well worth a journey to look at.

A few months later—at Christmas, 1898—I lost the second elephant, another fine female about ten years old, which I had had in my possession for only six months, at the Scottish Zoo. The building had been appropriately decorated for the festive season by a well-known Glasgow florist, and in spite of our precautions this young elephant contrived to get hold of some of the evergreens, among which was Irish yew, which she swallowed. As a result she died a most violent death. In fact, never in my life have I seen any other animal in such intense agony. It was heartrending to watch her death-throes. One moment she would be calm and collected and quietly appreciative of our attentions, while the next she was careering wildly, the acuteness of the pain causing her to lose all control of herself.

We have lost several horses through their eating the leaves of this poisonous tree. A notable instance occurred at Aberlour, in Banffshire. Here we had put up in a small square in front of a church. Two of our horses strayed to the church fence and must have partaken of a yew tree in the churchyard. They were dead within three hours. Fortunately they were not young animals, but among the oldest horses with the menagerie. Nevertheless their death involved me in loss.

The big African elephant, Lizzie by name, to whom I have referred fairly frequently in my earlier chapters,



ABDELLA, GIANT FEMALE INDIAN ELEPHANT. POISONED BY EATING AN IRISH YEW TREE AT HANLEY, STAFFS., SEPTEMBER, 1898, AND NOW STUFFED AND EXHIBITED IN THE EDINBURGH MUSEUM.

[To face p. 268.]





died with my mother's menagerie at Llansawell, Carmarthenshire, on Saturday, June 16th, 1888, five years after I had left the old show. My mother, who was greatly distressed by the elephant's death, wired me the following morning to come at once. I was with my own menagerie at Birkenhead and was moving with it to Chester the following day. There was no railroad to Llansawell, and, the motor car being as yet unknown, I could not get there until Monday afternoon; so that when I arrived my mother's menagerie had moved off to Lampeter, leaving the carcase behind. The animal in her death struggles had burst the side of her waggon and the staff had dragged the body out of this before their departure for Lampeter.

Just as I arrived on the scene I was handed a telegram from my mother which read: "Sold carcase to Swansea Museum, load elephant back into waggon and send Swansea soonest possible." Pulling a dead elephant weighing  $3\frac{1}{2}$  tons out of a waggon, which was 18 inches off the ground, was an easy undertaking compared with the operation of getting the same carcase back to the same waggon in the same position, viz., 18 inches from the ground. But the task had to be done, and quickly, as dead elephants decompose rapidly in warm weather.

I accordingly borrowed a dozen stout planks and rested them on the well of the waggon. Then I had the elephant pulled to about 8 feet from the waggon and had chains fixed to her four feet and passed right through the waggon. Next four of the six grey horses left behind with the waggon were attached to the chains and pulled the huge beast completely over,

so that her feet were resting on the short planks and facing the waggon. Three horses were then attached to her forelegs and the other three horses to her hind legs, and, after a little manœuvring with the big head and ears, with which difficulty was experienced, we managed to get the carcase into the waggon—a very tight fit indeed.

Soon afterwards I started the driver off with his load to Swansea, over thirty-five miles distant. He set out at 8.30 on a beautiful summer night, and after attending to a few further details I hired a horse conveyance to take me to Lampeter, fifteen miles away, where my mother's menagerie was stanced, and arrived there just before midnight. My mother's elephant waggon, as I indicated, was badly smashed, and as she was considering the advisability of retiring when she reached London she was averse to ordering a replacement. In the circumstances I offered her the loan of an elephant and waggon until she reached London, where she meant to give up business, and she was delighted to avail herself of this offer. On the following Saturday my mother's driver and six horses arrived at Oswestry, where my menagerie was located, and set out on Sunday morning to overtake the menagerie by fairly long stages somewhere in Pembrokeshire.

The big African elephant, beautifully stuffed, can be seen in Swansea Museum. At the period under review African elephants were plentiful, but to-day they are scarce and fetch big prices. The only ones at present in Britain are in the London Zoo.

Sunderland, in November, 1901, was the scene of a

very serious accident involving me in the loss of three camels which succumbed to gas poisoning. It is usual during the winter months to put the camels and dromedaries in a stable, shed, coach-house, or any covered quarter available, and this was done on this occasion. Usually these animals are exceptionally quiet and spend most of their time lying down like sheep; but on this occasion they had evidently been restless, and during the night one or other of them had pulled down a gas bracket and a small gas meter. The attendant on his arrival found the place filled with gas fumes and six camels prostrate. By dint of very hard work three of the animals were resuscitated and survived, but the other three were beyond human aid—another big loss to me. In the summer-time, I may add, the camels are housed in a tent beside the menagerie.

A much more serious affair for my mother had occurred at Huddersfield on November 8th, 1884, when she lost a magnificent team of seven roan horses through suffocation. The animals were stabled at an inn adjoining a bakery, and, although there was not even a singe on their bodies, they had all succumbed to fumes which had penetrated from the bakery to the stables. This was indeed a serious loss to my mother, as seven better horses for menagerie work had never been got together.

In none of the cases I have mentioned were we insured against such loss, but experience of this kind inculcated the wisdom of insuring our animals. We took legal advice in regard to the loss of the seven horses, and were assured that we had no claim for

compensation. But had the groom or the owner of the horses been staying at the inn we should have had a strong claim for damages—to my mind a very peculiar decision in law.

My mother, as was her wont when trouble came upon her, wired for me on this occasion. From Perth, where my menagerie was experiencing very stormy weather, I travelled all the way to Huddersfield to see her. I had a peculiar interest in the seven horses which had been suffocated, as I had purchased them for my mother just prior to setting up in business for myself about a year previously.

The animals in my menageries have on several occasions been overtaken by diseases, particularly anthrax and glanders, contracted by the carnivora eating contaminated meat. On occasions these maladies have almost wiped out my stock of carnivorous animals.

In Lancashire, in March, 1910, we experienced a particularly severe outbreak of anthrax. In my anxiety to curb the outbreak I brought in Mr. Frank Somers, veterinary surgeon of Leeds, to consult with the local veterinary surgeon. Mr. Somers, who had had a vast experience amongst menagerie animals, and for whom we always wired when in doubt, at once diagnosed the trouble as Gloss anthrax, a form of anthrax by which the throat and tongue are affected, the latter becoming so swollen and enlarged as to choke the animal. I have never seen an animal which has recovered from an attack of Gloss anthrax. The operation of the disease, according to my experience, is absolutely deadly, and the carcasses must be expe-



ditionously incinerated. Two Polar bears which were very badly affected with this trouble, and appeared in much pain, at the request of Mr. Somers were shot at once. One, Griffin Vulture, was very ill also, but this actually recovered and lived for years afterwards.

I have, however, seen instances where not all the carnivora which had consumed meat from a diseased animal were affected. It seemed strange that while one animal was taken ill and succumbed its neighbour was immune from attack. In these cases, of course, we took prompt steps to segregate the sick animal to prevent the spread of the disease.

In purchasing bullock meat we exercise even greater care than when buying horse-flesh, although we are pleased to get an opportunity of purchasing the former if it is reliable. Bullock meat provides a nice change for the stock, and, in any case, we have to purchase bullock heads and shins or sheep heads for variety, as regular feeding on horse meat is not good for most stock, being too strong. What is not generally known, too, is that it has been found very beneficial to the carnivora to fast one day per week, Sunday being the day they are not provided with meat.

The side of a lean bullock the menagerie butcher purchased from a slaughter-house in April, 1921, in Duns, near the border, proved a costly change in the animals' menu for me. Our butcher was assured that the other side of the bullock had been sold for human consumption, and accordingly he bought the remainder for the menagerie without a qualm. But eight days later two young tigers, eighteen months old, who had partaken of the bullock meat, were found in their cage

very ill. One of them had a bite in his throat and he died soon after his condition was discovered. It was concluded that he had received some rough mauling from his two companions, one of whom also died a short time later. These tigers had been bred in the menagerie and were great favourites, as it is very seldom that tigers are bred and reared in captivity.

Then a four-year-old lion sickened and died within a few hours, and during the next three days we lost a magnificent puma, a leopard, and an ocelot. In the case of the two tigers we had no suspicions of the bullock meat. The signs of a struggle between the pair—the evidence of the wound on the throat of one of them, etc.—disarmed that, and so we sent their skins to a taxidermist to be cured. But on the death of the puma we were both suspicious and alarmed, and so we dispatched all the carcasses to the Veterinary College, Glasgow, for examination. A decision was promptly arrived at in that institution. We were informed that the animals had succumbed to anthrax, but it was quite a different type of this disease to that of the former outbreak, there being no swelling of the throat. As a matter of fact, there had been little indication of the animals' serious condition, but the fatal germs were there, and they did their work quickly.

I also wired for Mr. Frank Somers, of Leeds. He arrived in Glasgow the following morning and accompanied me north to examine the rest of the carnivora. At this point I should like to acknowledge the many expert services rendered to me by this gentleman during the past thirty-five years. His great

experience and zoological knowledge, and the many operations he has performed on my animals, have been much appreciated by me.

All things considered, we escaped lightly in losing only six animals on this occasion. I remember in the old days, nearly fifty years ago, when I was on my mother's staff, we had several nasty outbreaks, principally among the lions, quite a number of which we lost. One of the worst epidemics occurred when we were in the London district. We spared no pains or expense to discover the cause of the trouble, but we never succeeded.

In 1913, two months after my menagerie had left London and gone into South Wales, several of the lions sickened and I hastened down from Glasgow to investigate the trouble personally. On this occasion I could not obtain the services of Mr. Frank Somers, as he himself was ill. I was at a loss to understand what was the matter with the animals, and so I brought in several veterinary surgeons, but none of them could diagnose the lions' sickness. Several of the lions succumbed, and immediately on my return home I consulted Professor McCall at the Veterinary College, Glasgow, in regard to the outbreak. The Professor by this time had had considerable experience with the live-stock at the Scottish Zoo, Glasgow, as I had always called him in when there was any ailment amongst the animals that baffled the staff.

The Professor, when I had explained what had happened, said it was very difficult for him to say what was wrong with the animals without having seen them. "Directly you lose another one" (there

were still some on the sick-list) "cut a piece of flesh from it, about 1 lb. in weight, put it in a tin box, and send it to me immediately," said the Professor.

This was done several times (for several more animals died), but without a diagnosis of the trouble being obtained. The difficulty was that the samples on their arrival were more or less decomposed, and the examination proved unsatisfactory.

Among the animals on the lengthening sick-list was a young lion, one of a pair we had bred and reared together, which I was certain was incurable. Despite the length and expense of the journey from South Wales to Glasgow, and because of my anxiety to ascertain the nature of the trouble, I wired for this young lion to be dispatched to Glasgow at once. The animal was boxed immediately and sent off to the Veterinary College, Glasgow, where, after being kept under observation for twenty-four hours, he was painlessly destroyed. From fresh blood taken from his body for microscopical examination Professor McCall was not long in deciding that the trouble amongst my animals was glanders. This unfortunate development—as I was in duty bound to do—I at once reported to the authorities.

It was on a Saturday morning that this decision was come to at the Veterinary College, and I took the night train to Chippenham, Wilts., where the menagerie had stanced, and arrived there about mid-day on Sunday. The police in that district had, of course, been notified, and almost immediately after my arrival they began their investigations.

On Monday morning, however, the menagerie pro-

ceeded to Calne, Wilts., and erected in the wide street there, as it had done for very many years on its periodical visits to the town. This is on the main road leading to London, Reading, Bath and Bristol, and the clearance on the road, when the menagerie was in position, was a matter of only 10 feet, so we were a decided inconvenience to passing traffic.

The police here had also been informed of the glanders outbreak, and accordingly paid us a visit, but we got through our performance and closed up. About midnight, however, after we had all gone to bed, I received very definite orders from the local Chief of Police, who woke me up at the hotel. From London he had received instructions to get in touch with the menagerie at once and inform us that not a horse was to be removed from the stables and not a wheel turned until certain officials, who were coming to Calne, had examined and tested every horse with Mallein.

Well, this was a fine predicament. We were advertised to appear at Trowbridge the following day, and, as a matter of fact, fully and properly advertised for at least ten days ahead, and here we were on this main road obstructing the traffic and forbidden to move an inch. The police had their instructions, and we had to abide by them ; there was no way out.

About noon several important-looking gentlemen from London put in an appearance. They were accompanied by the Chief of Police of the county. One of the visitors—a veterinary expert apparently—promptly got to work and subjected my horses, forty-six in number, to the Mallein test, which, I may say,



takes twenty-four hours to work. Next he directed his attention to the menagerie stock, but by this time the remnant of the carnivora were all fit. The young lion, which had been sent to Glasgow alive with the view of solving the mystery, had been the last wild animal to show symptoms of the disease, and, strange to say, his companion, with whom he had been in daily contact, maintained a clean bill of health. So far, so good.

We had to remain another night at Calne, and as a result many rumours, some sinister and some frivolous, got into circulation. On going to a local bank to change some notes I overheard a fussy little gentleman ask the banker if the menagerie was "broke," and if that was the reason it was held up in Calne.

However, about two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon the horses were re-examined, and, to my great relief, it was reported that not one of them showed the least sign of the dreaded disease. This is primarily an equine complaint, but naturally lions or other animals partaking of flesh from an affected animal are liable to contract the trouble.

We were given a clean bill of health at 2 p.m., and at once prepared to move. We left at 3 p.m., but owing to several of the horses having sickened from the Mallein test, the going to Trowbridge, fifteen miles distant, was very slow. We completed the journey by 7.30 p.m. and opened up, but did very little business owing to our being so late in arriving and being a day behind our advertised appearance. The next day's journey to Shepton Mallet, twenty-one miles away, was a rigorous one through a hilly

country. To add to our troubles, rain fell continuously, and it was sad to see the horses, which had not got over the Mallein test, struggling along the muddy roads. But the following day both the weather and the affected horses' health had improved, and we soon forgot our troubles.

I am thankful to be able to say that this was the last occasion we were worried by glanders, and I hope never to see it again. Of these two complaints among the animals, anthrax or glanders, the latter, in my opinion, is the more dreaded. Anthrax is quick in its operation, and one soon knows the worst, whereas glanders is a long, lingering malady which may cling to one's stock for many months, and even years.

In a previous chapter I mentioned that I had hired seven horses to a contractor in Glasgow with disastrous results. I shall now explain. These horses were hired to a contractor for their "keep," as I anticipated having no use for them for a long time, and still did not wish to sell them, as they were useful to the menagerie, in case I decided to restore No. 1 Menagerie to the road. The animals had been in their new or temporary quarters ten or twelve weeks when some kindly-disposed individual came to the Zoo one Saturday night and brought me information to the effect that there were several cases of glanders in the stable yard in question. This upset me very much, and I went to have a look at my animals the following morning. As far as I or anyone else could see they were quite healthy, and I could get little or no information as to the contractor's sick horses, because their stable door was locked and the only individual on the

spot was an uncommunicative yardman. Accordingly I decided to consult Professor McCall, of the Veterinary College, and he, when I saw him, informed me that he was aware that there had been trouble at certain stables in the vicinity of that at which my animals were quartered. The Professor advised me to get my horses away at once and to bring them to the College so that he could test them for me. I, therefore, sent a note to the stables informing the contractor that he was not to take out my horses the following Monday morning, as I was removing them at nine o'clock. This annoyed the contractor very much, but this did not worry me; I was concerned about the health of my horses.

At the Veterinary College the animals were subjected to a test, and thirty hours later I was informed that five of them had been given a clean bill of health and I was at liberty to remove them. This I did and had the animals sent out to the country to graze. Two of the animals, unfortunately, reacted and had not passed the test. They showed signs of the dreaded disease, and I acquiesced in the suggestion that these two horses should be left at the College for a further forty-eight hours and then subjected to another test. The second test proved even more decided than the first, and still there was not the slightest visible sign of disease in the animals. They were to all appearances in splendid condition. I asked for advice and was informed that several courses were open to me: I could put the animals to work or I could sell them (seeing there was nothing apparently wrong with them), or I could have them slaughtered. If I chose

the last-mentioned course and a post-mortem examination confirmed that the animals were victims of glanders, the Government, I was told, would allow me a proportion—I think it was a third—of their value. I replied that if the College experts were satisfied that the trouble was there, the animals' deaths was the only course that appealed to me, and that I would be a base creature if I sold them to anyone knowing them to be diseased. I was assured that the animals were actually suffering from glanders, and so I sent them—two beautiful beasts they were—to the knacker's yard, where they were slaughtered in the presence of several veterinary surgeons and myself. The post-mortem examination proved conclusively that the two horses were suffering from glanders, and a certificate given me to this effect by the veterinary surgeons enabled me to substantiate a claim for some recompense from the Government.

That was the end of this worry, and all went well until the menagerie set out again on March 14th, 1898. I restarted the menagerie, you may recollect, after spending nearly £6,000 on menagerie stock and horses, no less than £1,800 of this sum being incurred in the purchase of fresh horses. At that time I had a very good-looking French cart mare (Piebald) which was employed at the Zoo. Its principal, indeed its only, work was pulling a light advertising lorry about the city. She was getting on in years, and her hind legs had become greatly swollen, which I deemed to be due to insufficient exercise. It occurred to me that this could be remedied by sending her to work with the menagerie, which, a week gone from Glasgow,

was then stanced at Hamilton. I sent the mare there and she was stabled along with the other horses at the auction mart, where the animals, all in one place, were practically touching each other.

Judge of my surprise when, three days after the mare had joined the menagerie, I received a telephone message announcing that she had sickened, for, except for the swelling of the hind legs, which I explained away to my own satisfaction, she appeared in perfect health. I went to Hamilton to see her, and got a veterinary surgeon to examine her. In reply to his questions I informed him that I had had the mare for five years, and that for the past ten months she had been stalled in the Zoo Circus stable, and I also explained the nature of the work she had undertaken. "If this is not a case of glanders," he declared, "I am greatly mistaken." In fact, the vet. was now so sure that the mare had this disease that he advised me to separate her from the other horses at once, and, indeed, suggested that she should be destroyed. I told him that if he was perfectly satisfied that glanders was the mare's ailment I was prepared to send her to a horse slaughterer at once, but requested him not to report the incident in view of the fact that the mare had been in my stable at the Zoo Circus, and undertook to have her stall properly disinfected. The vet. agreed, and the mare was at once sent back to Glasgow for destruction. In her body were found unmistakable signs of the dreaded disease. There was quite a lot of this trouble in Glasgow at that time, and the mare must have contracted it in drinking from the public troughs in the city.



With the mare out of the way, I was not yet free from worry. I was greatly perturbed at the possibility of all the splendid horses with the menagerie, among which the diseased mare had stood for just three days and three nights, having contracted the disease. I reflected that I had been foolish in sending the mare to Hamilton, and the uncertainty of the future made me quite ill. The sequel was that I was laid low by my old enemy, rheumatic fever, with which I was first troubled when ten years of age and at school. Two months elapsed before I recovered from this attack, but during my convalescence I was happy to learn that my fears in regard to the menagerie horses had not been fulfilled.

Sunday at the Scottish Zoo, which was all under the one big roof, was looked upon as a day of rest. Such it was for the animals, which enjoyed every hour of it until 9 or 10 p.m., when, after their long sleep, the carnivora began to wake up in the hope of appeasing their appetites. Food, however, they did not get, as this was the one night per week they were called upon to fast, and the result was that on Sunday night they made more noise and gave more trouble than on the six other nights combined. In consequence, the night watchman had to be ever on the alert in case the carnivora started tearing their dens or threatened trouble in any other directions. The fact that the animals took this long sleep, of course, goes to show that, although during the week they had nothing to do but to submit to the gazes of an admiring public, they must have been pretty tired by Sunday.

But while Sunday was a day of rest for the animals, it was far from being that for myself, the proprietor and manager. My first duty on the seventh day of the week was to see that the building was properly ventilated, and next I saw that the animals got proper exercise, wherever this was possible.

Then I would adjourn to the office and put in from six to eight hours there, in order to clear off arrears of work that had accumulated during the week and to prepare for the change of company, etc., for the week just begun.

The eldest of my sons had by this time left school and the other three were still being educated at Dollar Academy. One Sunday, while I was busy in my office, the four boys (the three still attending school were at home on holiday) were playing with a fair-sized rubber ball, which accidentally fell into the concrete swimming pond occupied by Jock, the sea lion, who was a great favourite at the Zoo during the nine years he spent there. Jock at once seized the ball and swallowed it.

Prior to this I had heard the din made by the boys, who were full of the joy of life, and the sudden cessation of noise caused me to leave my desk to investigate. When I reached the office door I saw the boys all walking quietly towards the other end of the Zoo. Everything appeared to be in order, and so I returned to my desk without suspicion of anything unusual. It was long after the three boys had returned to school that I learned of what had taken place, and also of how they had risen very early on the Monday morning and repaired to the Zoo, in fear

and trembling lest the rubber ball should have killed the sea lion.

Jock, as a matter of fact, did not die until six years later, when it was discovered, on examination of his body, that his death had been caused by swallowing fish which had been line-caught. The hooks had not been removed from the fish and there were no fewer than eleven of these embedded or caught in various parts of his stomach. It is impossible to prevent an occurrence of this kind at the Zoo, which was open to the public all day. Sea lions eat a large quantity of fish, the stomachs of which are a necessary part of their diet, as they also are for seals. Moreover, had we removed the gut from every fish we bought, there was always the danger of promiscuous fish-feeding by the public, who knew Jock so well and used to bring them in for him.

Jock, as I have said, was very popular with our patrons. He caused no end of fun by his penchant for purloining hats and caps. He could not stand anyone resting with his back towards him on the wire-netting that surrounded his pool, and his method of correcting a patron's "misdemeanour" was to steal up quietly behind him, stand erect on his hind flappers, quickly remove his hat or cap, and dive into the water with it. To a newcomer to the Zoo his conduct came as a great surprise, but our regular patrons got used to it. They, as a matter of fact, were wont to encourage casual visitors to stand with their backs to Jock. The usual *modus operandi* was to direct the casual visitor's attention to a number of nice paintings I had hung up in the Zoo facing the sea lion's pond,

whereupon Jock would slip up behind the innocent and relieve him of his hat or cap while his pals, watching from a little distance away, roared with laughter. Jock's fondness for men's headgear cost me a tidy sum, but the fun his thefts yielded was well worth the money.

Post-mortem examination of animals, birds, etc., which succumbed in the Zoo or in my travelling menagerie have resulted in some amazing "finds." This is particularly the case in regard to ostriches. It is usual in menageries to allow these birds to get their head and necks out of their cages, and thus they become very friendly with visitors. Anything bright or shiny carried by visitors they promptly peck at, and so it comes about that foolish patrons have offered keys, knives, etc., taken from their pockets for the birds to peck at. They do not seem to realise the strength of the ostrich's beak. Unless the article is held very tightly by the visitor, the ostrich will have taken it from his hand and swallowed it in a trice. This has frequently happened during my career, and many times patrons have come to report to me the outcome of their foolhardiness.

In the Scottish Zoo we lost seven ostriches, six through swallowing articles, such as I have mentioned, and one from a broken neck. The last-mentioned had in some way got his neck twisted in the bars.

Not many years ago we had to destroy a fine camel because it was wasting away. We concluded it was suffering from lung trouble, but when the carcass had been examined, an assortment of articles, including

quite a number of nails, were found in the animal's stomach; and five of them, three-inch wire nails, were actually protruding through the stomach. These had been the root of the camel's trouble. Withal, there is nothing very remarkable in these "finds," since very peculiar articles are frequently found in the stomach of an ordinary bullock.



## CHAPTER XXV

*Prominent Wrestlers at the Glasgow Hippodrome—Exciting Incident during Hackenschmidt's Appearance—Unexpected Challenge by George Strenge, a German Wrestler—Pandemonium Reigns—Strenge's Manager Ejected and has to Run for his Life from Hooligans—Hackenschmidt Forced to Wrestle—He Pins Strenge to the Mat—Faking in Wrestling—A "Shady" Agreement I Discovered—Strong Men, Giants, Midgets, and Freaks I have Exhibited—Two Zulus Run Amok—How I Subdued them—The "Horseless Carriage"—A Success at Norwich, but a Fiasco at Leeds.*

**D**URING the many years I ran variety at the Glasgow Hippodrome, all the best wrestlers of the day appeared there. Amongst these were Georges Hackenschmidt (Russian Champion), Tarro Myaki (Japanese Champion), Ali Hassan and Hassan Murst (Egyptian Champions), Stanislan Zybso, Coord Derelli, Zara Costa (Bulgarian Champion), Mahmout (Albanian Champion), Constant Le Marin and Alfred Sturm (Belgians), Antonia Fournier and Maurice Deriaz (French), Padoubny, Lemm, Antonie Pierre, Gus Rennent, Ruku (Japanese), Alex. Munro (Scottish Champion), James Esson, Willie Withers Bain, Patrick Connolly, George Paterson, James Campbell, Cameron, A. H. Manley, Peter O'Connor, G. M. Ross, and David Hodge. In this galaxy of wrestling talent the two first-mentioned, in my opinion—Hackenschmidt and Tarro Myaki—were absolutely pre-eminent.

Hackenschmidt's two visits to Glasgow were under



THE THREE SAXONS, CHAMPION STRONG MEN, 1899.

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the management of Mr. C. B. Cochran, now a very important figure in the theatrical world. On the occasion of the first visit we experienced a most exciting time. The Hippodrome held nearly 3,000 people, and it was absolutely packed at each performance. At a *matinée* on Wednesday the programme went splendidly until the appearance of Hackenschmidt. The lecturer had just introduced the great wrestler, when a man, placed midway in the stalls, stood up and made some statement or challenge, and before he had completed his speech, another man—a very big fellow—seated next to him jumped up, and, having dropped his clothing, stood naked except for a wrestling costume. This was none other than George Strengé, a big heavy-weight German wrestler, who was appearing at another hall in the town. In a trice Strengé and his manager—such was his companion, but I shall not mention his name—were making for the stage door down the centre gangway, gesticulating and challenging as they went. At the Wednesday *matinée* we were always undermanned, as all our attendants were unable to get away from their daytime employment. They were, of course, free in the evenings and on Saturday afternoons. For this sudden and unexpected demonstration we were therefore unprepared, but two of my sons, who fortunately were at hand, made a quick move towards the stage, but not quick enough to prevent the wrestler getting on to it. He was, as a matter of fact, almost pushed up by his manager. The latter, himself a wrestler of some repute, was tackled by my sons, and he was balked in his endeavours to follow his

at present at a very low ebb in Glasgow, into disrepute. In contrast to the above quoted agreement, let me quote in full one made by myself. It was as follows :—

THE SCOTTISH ZOO AND HIPPODROME.

An agreement between E. H. Bostock on the one part and Tarro Myaki and Alex. Munro on the other part for a special wrestling match between the above-named contestants in the Ju-Jitsu style at a special matinée in the Zoo Hippodrome on Friday afternoon, November 29th, 1907.

Mr. Bostock to provide the full variety company as usual and to give up 60 per cent. of the gross receipts of the said matinée in consideration of an honest and genuine wrestling match to a finish.

It is distinctly understood that, this being a legitimate contest in the Ju-Jitsu style, both contestants wear the uniform Japanese jacket.

(Signed) E. H. BOSTOCK.

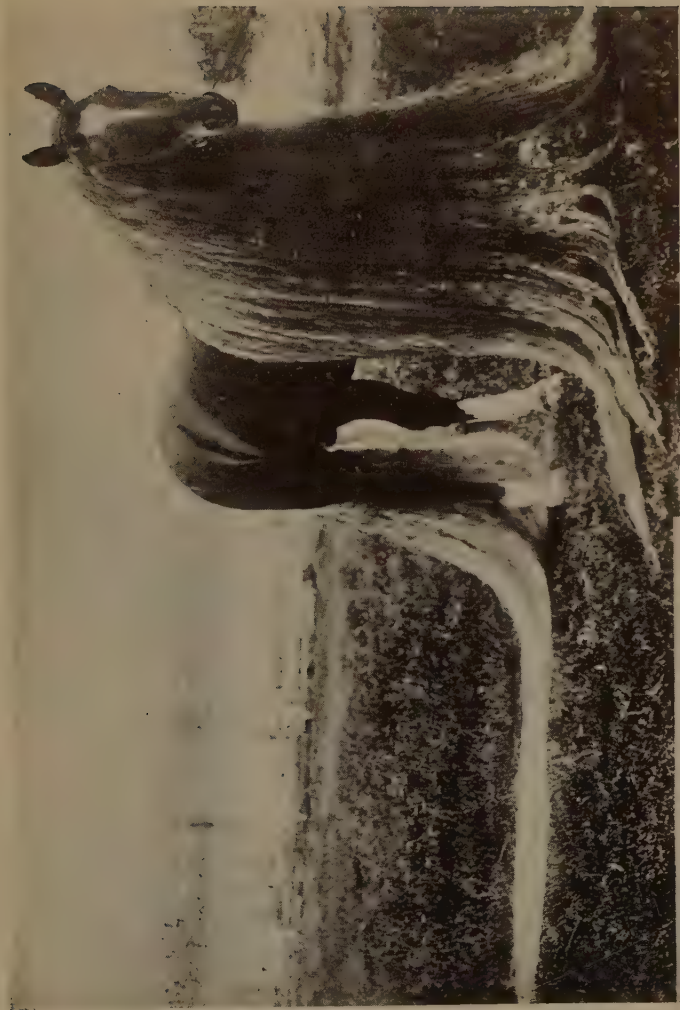
(Signed) HENRY ATHOL for TARRO MYAKI.

(Signed) ALEX. MUNRO.

Among the strong men I have presented, none, in my opinion, can compare with the Saxon Trio, of which Arthur Saxon was the principal. They were legitimate strong men, and they became very popular in Glasgow, where at that time there were some very good strong men, including the Brothers Bothwell and the Brothers Teviotdale.

Outstanding among the many wonderful freaks we presented at the Glasgow Hippodrome was Machnow, the Russian Giant. I think I saw all the physical





LINUS, THE WONDERFUL DOUBLE-MANED AND LONG-TAILED HORSE, FOR WHICH AN ENORMOUS  
PRICE WAS GIVEN.

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supermen of my period, and Machnow was undoubtedly the tallest of them all. He stood nearly 9 feet in height, while Clive Darrell, who also showed under our auspices, was just over 8 feet. Then we had Lewis Wilkins, who was about 8 feet in height; Renwick, the Scottish-American Giant, who, although very thin, was 8 feet 4 inches in height; Marriedl, the Swiss Tyrolean Giantess, 7 feet 10 inches; and Madame Ella and Aaron Moore, coloured people, who were both about 7 feet 6 inches.

Apollo, the Scottish Hercùles, who hailed from Glasgow, also toured with both my menagerie and circus for four years, and actually lifted a small elephant at every performance.

Among the midgets we presented to the public were Mrs. Tom Thumb, widow of the original Tom Thumb, of Barnum celebrity; Count and Baron Magri (Hungarians); and Fatma and Smaun (Indians). Fatma was 24 inches, and Smaun, the lady, 20 inches. They were of very slight build, and the man was undoubtedly an artiste and an acrobat.

In 1902 we exhibited the Colibris Troupe of Midgets, eleven in number, who provided an hour's really good circus performance. Some of them were very small, and all of them were more or less clever.

Other small notables we presented were Chiquata, the Cuban midget, and Anita, the Hungarian midget. Both these little ladies were exceptionally dainty, and were, moreover, 10 inches smaller than the original Tom Thumb, with whom Barnum made quite a sensation, and, incidentally, a fortune.

A novelty I have good reason to remember having

exhibited was Barnum's Zulus. I had a very unpleasant experience with them at Scarborough. These two Zulus (genuine natives), who used to provide a very interesting display of native dancing, assagai-throwing, etc., were accommodated in a living waggon by themselves, and in this now and then they had a skirmish between themselves. On the particular occasion I have in mind they attacked each other with their assagais in an alarming manner, and it soon became evident that if we desired to keep *two* Zulus someone would have to intervene, for that one was, if the fight was allowed to continue, bound to go under was apparent when one of their assagais came flying through the window.

I thereupon hastened to the waggon door, to find it fastened. When the bellicose Zulus refused to obey my command to open the door, I burst this open and came upon the warriors, who had desisted for a moment, when I entered. Both were bleeding from several wounds, and it was all too evident that they had been imbibing alcoholic liquor. Both could speak a little English, but in their excitement this language eluded them, and I, of course, did not understand Zulu.

After I had obtained silence for a few seconds, they resumed jabbering at each other, and shaped up to resume the fight. It was then I had an inspiration. Recollecting that these warriors have a great dread of snakes, I made a dash for the snake-case, took out one of the reptiles, and brought it in my hand to the Zulus' living waggon. I held the head of the snake towards the warriors and advanced, whereupon all

thought of further fighting with each other fled in face of their common terror. They crouched together at the far end of the waggon, and I then instructed one of the staff to deprive them of their assagais. These the Zulus gave up without any further trouble, for they were now thoroughly subdued. The result of the "dust-up," however, was that they missed the afternoon performance, but long before the evening show they had become normal again, and, in possession of their assagais, which had been returned to them, they went through their usual performance. Thereafter we had no more trouble with them.

One of my earliest recollections of menagerie life has been revived by the writing of the foregoing incident. In 1861, when I was two and a half years of age, my parents were travelling with my aunt's menagerie (Edmonds', late Wombwell's Menagerie). There were in the show two Zulu Kaffirs, who at the time were a great attraction to the public, they being the first, I believe, that had been seen in Britain. These warriors, who, like the Zulus above referred to, had a living waggon to themselves, took a great fancy to me as a child and used to take me to their waggon and play with me for hours on end. But one day I had an accident there. I pulled a kettle of boiling water over on to my bare legs (I was then in petticoats, of course) and badly scalded my little limbs. The marks of the scalding I have carried ever since.

Of the many equine and other animal attractions I have introduced, the first I shall mention is White Wings, a beautiful, pure white Percheron (a stallion),



with extraordinary mane and tail. Its mane was 14 feet long and its tail 17 feet long.

Unfortunately, its tail had been cut off by a revengeful groom while the animal was in America, and this had to be plaited on and doctored up for show purposes. But for this defect I might not have been able to acquire the animal. It was secured for me by my late brother, F. C. Bostock, in Kansas, U.S.A.

Another freak of this kind he, after many futile attempts, procured for me was named Linus. This was a horse, chestnut coloured entire, which, while not so large as White Wings, had two distinct manes, one on each side of the neck. Each mane was 14 feet long and was very full of hair. Its tail measured 16 feet, and was also very prolific of hair. Linus cost me £1,200—four times more than I paid for White Wings—but its drawing powers did not come up to expectations. The reason for this was that the novelty had worn off. White Wings had already been all round the country, and the public were ready for a fresh freak. Linus and White Wings, however, were both animals of which one could well feel proud.

I have also exhibited some very fine giant horses, the best of these being perhaps Columbus, which came from America. A handsome grey, he was just over 20 hands high. Tall mules were another of my specialities. One of these, which was sandy-coloured, was 20½ hands high—the tallest equine animal I have ever seen.

Three hairless or india-rubber-skinned horses—pure freaks—were shown by me. Two of these came from



WHITE WINGS, THE LONG-MANED AND LONG-TAILED HORSE FROM TEXAS. A WONDERFUL ATTRACTION.

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Ireland and were acquired cheaply. They were splendid animals, but not fit for much work, as their skins chafed so readily. The third animal was picked up in Yorkshire. It was heavier than the two others, and its skin about the legs was not quite so clear of hair as on the two others. I also had a pair of pure white mules, which I purchased from Barnum and Bailey's, whilst in Olympia, London, in 1898.

A special attraction I provided for the public was a number of very tiny Shetland ponies, one of which was only 26 inches high. Other interesting exhibits were several zebra hybrids; that is, a cross, in one instance, between a zebra and a pony, and, in another, between a zebra and a donkey.

I also recall the purchase of a woolly pony, 14 hands high. I bought it in the winter-time, and then it had long curly hair like the coat of a well-kept retriever; but, unfortunately, for exhibition purposes, when spring arrived the pony shed its coat, like all other horses, and its coat was not much curlier than any of the other horses in my stables.

Writing of hybrids, I am reminded of a purchase I made from Messrs. Hagenback, Hamburg, of a lion-tiger hybrid, a full-grown animal, for a fabulous sum, since I was always out to get something fresh for my patrons. The sire of this animal was a lion and the dam a tigress. It was as large as any lion I have seen, but, although it was a male, it showed not the least sign of a mane, while its stripes were not nearly so dark as those of the tiger proper. I still have this animal's skin, as none of the museums seemed to care for it as an exhibit. As a matter of fact, the hybrid,

when alive, did not evoke much interest on the part of the public. After all, a lion with a good mane or a tiger of natural colour is much more attractive to patrons.

In November, 1896, I borrowed and exhibited the first motor car ever seen in the eastern counties. The contraption, then known as the "Horseless Carriage," was shown inside the menagerie at Norwich during the Fat Cattle Show Week as an added attraction. The menagerie was located on the Castle Hill—a very uneven stance—and although several of my stronger employees had to assist the "motor car" whilst going up the hill, it proved to be a very good draw. This one was kindly lent to me by a brother showman, Mr. A. Anderton.

I was unable to obtain the further use of this car, but I managed to secure another one from a London firm to show during our stay in Leeds a month later, and where we were to spend four or five weeks. This car, which was of another make, came by rail in a covered carriage truck from London to Leeds. On its arrival I suggested to its driver, a Cockney gentleman, who thought he knew everything, that he should wait until it was dark before he took the car through the main street to the back of the Market, where the menagerie was located. "Oh, no," was his rejoinder. "Why wait until it is dark? I can run it through in less than ten minutes, and very few will see it."

But the "Horseless Carriage" in those days had a nasty habit of going wrong, and it was very unfortunate for me that this specimen on this occasion





THE HORSELESS CARRIAGE OR MOTOR CAR, FIRST SEEN IN THE EASTERN COUNTIES NOVEMBER, 1896.

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had only travelled about three minutes' walk from the station when it "conked out." On the spot where it had come to a standstill it remained for over three hours, during which it was the object of much jeering and many sarcastic comments by thousands of the population.

The result was considerable damage to my business. The success of the other "Horseless Carriage" at Norwich had emboldened me to provide a similar attraction for Leeds. I had advertised it as the first "Horseless Carriage" seen in Yorkshire, but the hitch, which was given unnecessary publicity through the obstinacy of the driver, took all the glamour from the invention. Indeed, the Leeds people concluded that I was hoaxing them, and they resented this.

## CHAPTER XXVI

*In Conclusion—Still in Harness—My Latest Venture—Keeping Abreast of the Times—I Form a Private Limited Liability Company—Thanks to Employees and General Public—Menagerie Work no Sinecure—Assistance from Strangers—Showmen as I have Found Them—Honest in Dealing—My Claim to Title of “The British Barnum.”*

I AM now getting towards the end of my story, which I have written while still in harness. So far from thinking of retiring, I am still seeking for new fields in which to conquer. My latest venture was the purchase of the King's Theatre, Greenock. This is a very fine building, which, after having spent a small fortune in redecorating it and bringing it up-to-date, I have added to my tour, The Bostock Circuit.

It may also be of interest to know that I have turned all my hippodrome theatres and picture-houses (with the exception of the Norwich Hippodrome, in which I have a partner) into a private limited liability company under the name of E. H. Bostock & Sons, Ltd. Thus, when I am called hence, the vast business which I have built up should suffer no disorganisation.

I feel that I have not led either a lazy or a useless life. Throughout my career I have always endeavoured to keep abreast of the times, and I believe I have succeeded. Incidentally, I have made ample provision for my family and also—I say it without egotism—I have had pleasure in helping many “a

lame dog over a stile." I have, therefore, the satisfaction of knowing that, so far as my own circle is concerned, I shall leave the world better than I found it.

Before closing, I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to all my different staffs and their managers, particularly the employees of Bostock and Wombwell's Travelling Menagerie, with which I spent my early and struggling days. During our peregrinations together we visited, it is safe to say, every town and most of the villages from Land's End to John o' Groat's in any and every kind of weather, working and exhibiting to a time-table, so to speak. And here let me say that the work of an employee with a big travelling menagerie is no sinecure. The job calls for courage and endurance. Moreover, with so much live-stock demanding almost incessant attention, the work never seems done. Ofttimes the menagerie worker is at it from 4 a.m. until 11 p.m. and under conditions with the minimum of comfort. But the majority of my menagerie employees have been with the show for many years—one has been over forty years in the service, five over thirty years, and several over twenty years. Their loyal service, their whole-hearted exertions to keep the old show on top, I appreciate very sincerely, and I again express to them my genuine thanks.

Next I should like to thank the public generally for their unstinted support of all my ventures, but especially for their long patronage of my travelling menagerie. It goes without saying that without this support the old show could not have kept on the road.



To the many good friends we met in the course of our travels are also due a meed of praise and thanks. Many people, who were perfect strangers to us, went out of their way to assist us in many directions, and thus smoothed over countless difficulties for us. We, of course, met the other sort—people who seemed to delight in making trouble for others—but happily they were few, for which we were very thankful.

When I was a boy I was taught by my parents to be strictly honest and God-fearing, and sent regularly to church, and, during later days on the road, encouraged to continue church attendance where circumstances permitted. I recollect that, as a youth on the road with the menagerie, I used to think that we were inclined to be rather a wicked lot; but, since settling down over thirty years ago, during which I have had plenty of opportunities to study human nature, I have changed my mind in regard to this. Indeed, I have come to the conclusion that the average showman is just as virtuous as the settled citizen of a city. In fact, for honest dealing and general morality, showmen, as a class, will bear comparison with any section of the community with which I have come in contact.

I would like to say a word or two about the great cry against training of wild and domesticated animals for public performances, and to deny, in a most emphatic manner, the alleged statement as to the cruelty that is necessary to secure this end.

I question if any person has had as much to do with this branch, that is, the training of zoological specimens for performances, as my late brother, F. C. Bostock,

and myself, and I can truthfully state that I have never been guilty of cruelty, neither have I countenanced same in any form as enumerated by the cranks who have taken up the cudgels in their own way for the defence of the animals—a very worthy cause, provided, like many others, they do not go to crazy extremes to obtain unjust evidence for prosecution. It is the extremist in every instance that one has to fear, and who looks for a case, and is disappointed if he does not find it, and tries to conjure one up.

My animal-training days are past, and I have no longer any reason to urge the continuance of same, but while I am still spared I will speak the truth.

As for my late brother, F. C. Bostock, who actually was my pupil—and he later became the greatest animal trainer and exhibitor the world has ever known—I could not, of course, see the whole of his training in this country, and none of it in America, where he spent so many years, but I have every reason to believe that he would be both kind and considerate with every animal with which he came in contact, as we both loved and valued our animals, or we should not have stuck to the zoological business as he did until his death and I have done for nearly sixty years.

In 1903, when my brother was in the full tide of success in America, a very able writer, Ellen Velvin, F.Z.S., New York, the author of several well-known books, edited a book, "THE TRAINING OF WILD ANIMALS," by F. C. Bostock, and I will here quote her introductory remarks :—

"Before editing this book, I took the opportunity offered by Mr. Frank C. Bostock of practically living

in one of his animal exhibitions for a few weeks, in order to see things as they were, and not as I had always heard of them.

"I was allowed to go in and out at all times and all hours ; to enter the training-schools whenever I liked ; to go behind the runways and cages—a special privilege given to the trainers only, as a rule—and to be a spectator of whatever happened to be going on at the time.

"The thing which interested me most, and to which I paid special attention, was that at no time in this exhibition did I once see the slightest act of cruelty in any way. Each one of the trainers and keepers had a pride in his own special animals, and I had many proofs of their kindness and consideration to their charges. The sick animals were most carefully looked after and doctored, and in one case of a lion cub having convulsions, I noticed dim eyes in more than one keeper when the poor little animal was convulsed and racked with suffering.

"Had I seen the least cruelty or neglect in any way, I need scarcely say nothing would have induced me to edit this book.

"ELLEN VELVIN.

"NEW YORK CITY,

"June 8th, 1903."

This, in itself, answers many of the stupid questions that one hears on this subject, and I therefore beg to leave it at that.

I have given you a plain, unvarnished tale of my numerous activities. I have neither invented nor

exaggerated the incidents I have endeavoured to describe. These reminiscences have been written at the urgent request of many friends and patrons, and if the reader derives from the perusal of these pages as much pleasure as I have had in writing them, I shall be more than satisfied.

Who is "The British Barnum"? As I was getting towards the end of these memoirs, a newspaper discussion, in which I took part, arose on this point. I put forward my claim to the title, and I think readers who have read the complete story of my career will agree that my claim is neither wild nor extravagant.





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